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THE LIFE & MIRACLES
OF ST BENEDICT
BY
ST GREGORY THE GREAT.

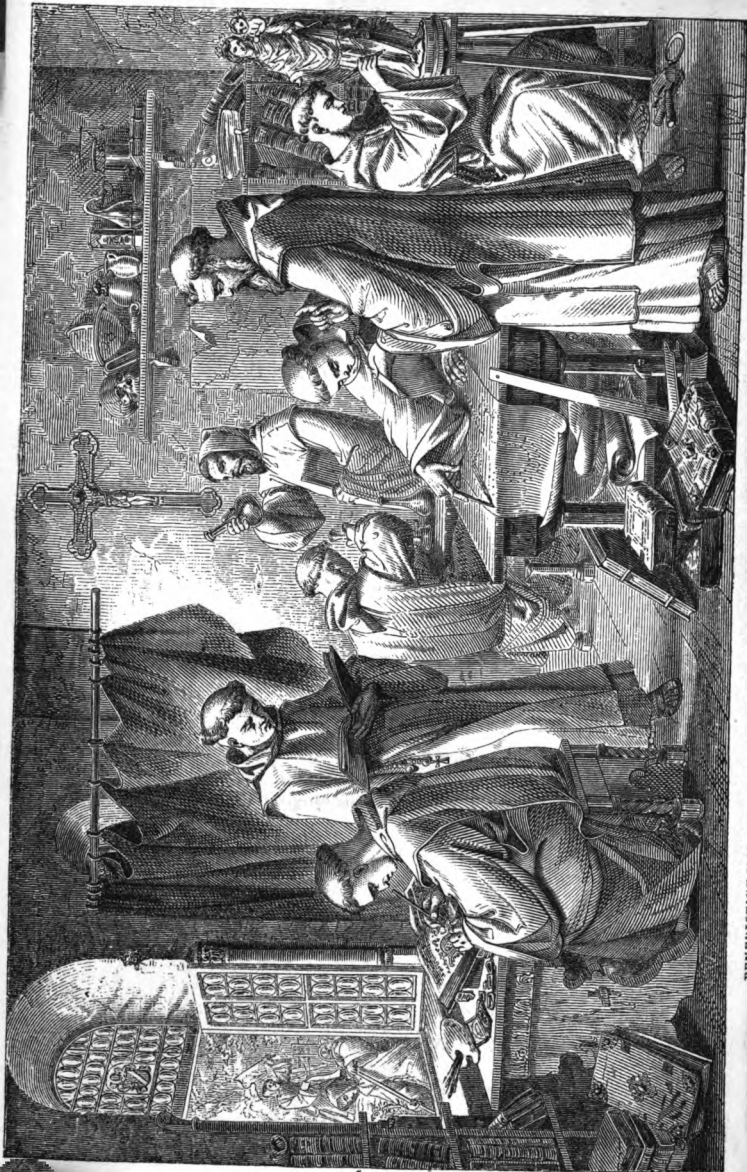
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BENEDICTINE MONKS DURING THE MIDDLE AGES ENGAGED AT THEIR DAILY WORK IN THE MONASTERY.

THE
LIFE AND MIRACLES
OF THE
HOLY FATHER BENEDICT.

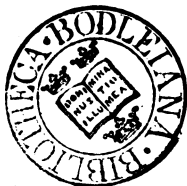
TRANSLATED FROM THE
SECOND BOOK OF THE DIALOGUES OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT,
BY THE
REV. HENRY FORMBY.
FOLLOWED BY THE
SPIRIT OF THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT,
BY THE
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BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.
With Ten Illustrations from Original Designs.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE MISSION OF ST. BENEDICT;

OR,

THE NECESSITY, REASONABLENESS, AND VALUE OF THE
RELIGIOUS* OR REGULAR LIFE IN THE CHURCH.

THE publication of St. Gregory the Great's Life of St. Benedict, together with the Spirit of the Saint's ascetic rule, in a form adapted for an extensive circulation, seems to demand in the way of introduction some such brief explanation as may serve to guard the minds of simple and pious readers, not merely against the grounds on which monastic life is made the subject of open attack and ridicule under the opprobrious name of "monkery," but also against others less open to suspicion by which it may notwithstanding come to be almost as effectually robbed of the honour that is both its rightful due and that has in all ages and times been paid to it by the faithful.

"Those teachers," observes Professor Mœhler, in a work on the history of monasticism, which unhappily for the Church he never lived to complete, "who have endeavoured, as they thought, to exhibit Christianity in the most lovable and amiable light,—that is to say, compatible to the extreme verge of possibility with the world and its false moral notions and practices,—hoping thereby to win the world over to themselves, have almost invariably failed in the attainment of their object."

According to the doctrine and practice of the Apostles, however, the world is not so much to be caught or attracted as, which is quite a different thing, to be subdued, overcome, and destroyed, and after destruction to be created afresh upon a different pattern to a new and a Divine model. The world, according to the Apostle St. John, lieth in wickedness. The world is the perpetuation of the sin of Adam and Eve in Para-

* The expression *religious life* is perhaps the best adapted to denote that which is common to all the different forms under which the thing itself exists in the Church. A religious life means the living by a special and fixed rule, and differs in this respect from Christian life in the world, which is subject only to the general law of the Gospel. Of the religious, or regular, life there are many varieties, and St. Benedict is the patriarch and legislator of what is properly called the monastic or cloister life.

dise ; that is to say, it is human society making no account of its God, and therefore daily repeating the original act of disobedience.

To see the fallen world as it were in a mirror, we must study it in its original act of disobedience ; for in that act are contained all the various master-principles of evil, which cause the world, as St. John says, to lie in wickedness.

I. Contempt of God as a teacher, in listening to the devil saying, "Ye shall become as gods, knowing good and evil," and in looking to a visible created thing as the source of knowledge.

II. Contempt of the majesty of God as an object of worship (*Latria*), in the coveting and in the deliberate mental preference of a beautiful created thing to the Creator.

III. Contempt of God as Lord and supreme owner of His creation, in taking forcible possession of the creature which God had not given the right or title to possess.

IV. Contempt of the beatific fruition of God, in preferring before Him a created object of sensual gratification,—a fruit to be eaten.

V. Contempt of God as sovereign Ruler, in violating the rule and order of Paradise.

VI. Contempt of God as the supreme Judge, in disbelieving and despising at the suggestion of the devil His threatened sentence of death : "In the day ye eat thereof ye shall surely die."

VII. Seduction of the man by the perverted charms and persuasion of the woman.

Of this world, thus lying in wickedness, St. Paul writes, "What communion hath light with darkness ? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial ?" "If ye were of the world," says our Saviour, "the world would love its own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "This," writes St. John, "is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

The followers of the Gospel, then, are thus situated : they find the human society that surrounds them lying in wickedness, and the doctrine they themselves profess not only disclaiming to have any thing in common with the wickedness of the world, but to be in direct antagonism to it.—that is to say, Christ against Belial ; next, they themselves, in their own persons, are chosen by a Master, not merely to be different from the world, but to be hated by it ; and lastly, they are called, not to be overcome by the world that stands against them, but to overcome and to subdue it to their doctrine, and to form it anew to the Divine pattern of life exhibited in the person of their Master.

I. We ask, then, who among the followers of Christ are

those who undo in the most perfect manner the world's first master-principle of evil, the "contempt of God as the author and teacher of human knowledge?" And the answer obviously is, the faithful monk and nun, who embrace a life the whole intellectual business of which is to be spent in the unceasing study and meditation of the Holy Scriptures and of the fathers of the Church, and in the continual intercourse with God in the holy exercise of prayer. To the monk and the nun God and His Word are the paramount sources of knowledge; the world of created things is at best but an auxiliary.

II. Contempt of God as an object of worship, and the preferring the beautiful creature to Him. Who here, we ask, destroys and tramples under foot this master-principle of the world's wickedness more than the faithful monk and nun, whose one sole exclusive business in life it becomes, in virtue of their vocation, to worship God alone, and to trample under foot all worship of the creature?

III. Contempt of God as supreme proprietor and owner of His creation. Who does despite to this master-principle of the world's wickedness more than those who, as an act of solemn homage to their Lord and God, divest themselves by their own voluntary act of the very property which the laws of their God not only sanction their holding, but protect them in possessing? The only Christians, however, who do this formally and past redemption are those who take the vows of the religious life.

IV. Who is there who keeps such a watch over the senses, and leads such a life of fasting and sensual mortification, as the monk or nun?

V. VI. The sentiments and language of the fallen world in respect of the sovereign power and authority of God over His creation are found in the verse of the Psalm, "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" And with respect to the sentence of death in particular, they are pointed to in the words of Moses: "O that they were wise, and that they would consider their latter end!" The fallen world insists upon being its own master, and upon forgetting its sentence of death. We ask, Who are those Christians who trample these darling sentiments of the fallen world the most victoriously under foot? And the only answer that can be given is, the monk and the nun, who make the voluntary sacrifice of even their natural liberty as a solemn act of homage to God, placing themselves under complete obedience to a religious superior during the remainder of their life; and who live henceforth, as may be said, no longer for life, but for death, waiting patiently for that change to come which it is the principle of the fallen world to hide and keep out of sight.

VII. The seduction of the man by the woman. Who are those who trample this last master-principle of the world's apo-

tasy more directly under foot than the monk and the nun, who voluntarily forego that mutual society which God has not only allowed, but has blessed and raised to the dignity of a sacrament; the one withdrawing himself from the influence of seduction, and the other renouncing her power of exercising it?

With all these master-principles of the fallen world thus crushed and trampled under foot in the monastic life, it cannot be any longer possible to wonder at the implacable hostility of the world to the religious life of the Church. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own." But monks and nuns are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them.

Another remark of Mœhler deserves our attention. "Monastic life," he says, "and the principles on which it is founded, as has been the case with every other institution of the Church without exception, has not been exempt from attacks within the pale of Christianity itself. These attacks, while they vary according to times, circumstances, and persons, usually take two entirely opposite directions. On the one hand, the error of the times and persons remarkable for their religious vigour and their exalted estimate of the Divine dignity of the Christian religion, accuses the Church of having, in its desire to find out a medium between extremes, fallen far short of the truth, and of having struck up a low unworthy compromise with Jew and Greek, and with laxity and immorality; while, on the other hand, the error of a corrupt and relaxed time taxes the Church with extending what is merely special and peculiar in Christianity beyond all bounds of reason and propriety, as if it thought it could never take up into itself enough of what was extravagant, superhuman, marvellous, and transcendental."

"Savage people alone," continues Mœhler in another place, "have no perceptible signs of monasticism to exhibit; while their opposite, over-refined and fashionable people, show the strongest symptoms of a hatred and a desire to get rid of it. In the one case spiritual life is too lumpish to give birth to the monk, and in the other too feeble and effeminate to keep him alive; and even though he should still linger there, he is really no better than the shadow that may be occasionally seen after the body which casts it is out of sight."

Between these two extremes, the Church has at all times consistently adhered to her middle course; and the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a life spent exclusively in the service of God, stand in the Church's doctrine upon the footing, not of conditions of salvation, which all alike must perforce accept in order to be saved, but as voluntary acts of homage most acceptable to God, most meritorious for the soul, undoing the sin and evil of the original fall in the most perfect manner. Of the monastic life, the Church only says, If

you are high-souled and generous, and if you seek and aspire after perfection,—if you desire to take the kingdom of heaven by force,—this is the good way in which to walk and to attain what you desire. These vows are the evangelical counsels; and in the carrying them into effect you may hope to reach the greatest measure of resemblance to the one Divine pattern of human life, Jesus Christ, God made man.

“But why do you choose such a soul-wearying, monotonous, painful, hard, humiliating, and mortified way of life?” says the world to the monk. “I seek the kingdom of heaven,” replies the latter. “I have been told by One whose words I believe, ‘Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there are that go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, that leadeth to life; and few there be that find it!’ (Matt. vii. 13.)” “Well, but is it possible,” the world persists, “that you can be ignorant that ‘salvation is easy’? Why, then, do you do despite in this extraordinary way to the princely liberality of your Saviour, who cannot be pleased at your going about in this painfully humiliating manner to secure that which He has of His sovereign love made so easy of attainment?” “Whether salvation is easy of attainment or not, I do not inquire,” replies the monk. “‘It is sufficient for the disciple to be as his master’ (Matt. x. 25); and ‘every one shall be perfect if he be as his master’ (Luke vi. 40). If you will tell me of your charity in what I am still unlike my Master, I will endeavour to amend and become more like Him.”

“But though it may be quite true,” the world perseveres to urge, “that these hard ways of yours were those of your Master, yet, however hard they may have been upon His shoulders, surely you cannot but know that your salvation is easy, easy indeed? Why, then, scare away others by these hard mortifying ways? Why not show them the beauty of the easy ways of Divine love; why so perversely set the world against you by

* “Who can say,” writes Dr. Faber, “that salvation is not easy, easy indeed to us, however hard it was upon the shoulders of the Incarnate Word” (*Creature and Creator*, p. 296). A brief introduction to the biography of the great patriarch and legislator of ascetic life, written by a Pope and Doctor of the Church, cannot be deemed a proper place for a controversy with the accomplished author of *The Creature and the Creator*. Its obvious divergence, however, from the doctrine of the “*easiness of salvation*,” recently broached by that well-known popular writer, may be properly accompanied by the hope that Dr. Faber will himself be the first to solicit the judgment of the Holy See upon his book *The Creature and the Creator*. The learned author of that admired work does not need to be reminded, that it is no misfortune to a theologian, if he have the truth on his side, to fail in immediately convincing every reader of the soundness of what he has written. The real misfortune is, when the truth is given to the world, and it finds the people too timorous to venture an attack upon it, and too feeble and effeminate to think of benefiting themselves by studying it and putting it in practice.

the sight of this hard revolting course; why not rather win the world to the love of the easiness of its salvation?" The monk replies, "'Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal to me, thou savourest not of the things that are of God, but the things that are of men' (Matt. xvi. 23). Has not the Master said to me; 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me?' (Matt. xvi. 24.) Go your way, and at least leave me to follow my Master, if you will not follow Him yourself." On the departure of his tempter, will not the monk then sing with the inspired Psalmist, "Thou hast tried me by fire, that my mouth may not speak the works of men: for the sake of the words of Thy lips, I have kept **HARD WAYS**: perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved"? (Ps. xvi. 4.)

But if the monk be a servant of God, who makes choice of and embraces not easy but hard ways; and if his prayer be to be perfected in the paths of God,—the difference between the life of the monk and that of the ordinary Christian, it must never be forgotten, is not one of kind, but only of degree. The ordinary Christian hears previous to his baptism the doctrine, "*if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.*" He is asked, "Dost thou renounce Satan?" and he must answer, "I do renounce him." "And all his works?" "I do renounce them." "And all his pomps?" "I do renounce them." Then after having made profession of his faith, and having received baptism, a white garment is placed upon him, in token of the new nature which has been given to him; and he is bid "*to carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of his Lord, Jesus Christ, that he may have eternal life;*" and lastly, receiving a burning light in his hands, he is dismissed with these remarkable words: "Keep thy baptism so as to be without blame; keep the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet Him in the company of all the saints of the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever. Amen."

According to the Council of Trent, in the 7th and 8th canons respecting baptism, all baptised persons are held to be debtors to the whole law of Christ, and to the precepts of the holy Church. One of its canons expressly anathematises (can. xx. *De Justificatione*) any one who should say that the Gospel is a point-blank absolute promise of eternal life, without the keeping of the commandments as a condition. In its canon on the Sacrament of Penance, the Council says, "But God, rich in mercy, and knowing what we are made of, has given the medicine of life even to those who after baptism again deliver themselves over into the servitude of sin, and into the power of the devil." After declaring the fullness of the remission of sin in

baptism, and the entire newness of life conferred by it, 'the Council says, that we cannot by any possible means (nequaquam) be restored to the newness of life through the Sacrament of Penance—"sine magnis nostris fletibus et laboribus, divinâ id exigente justitiâ,"—*without great weeping and labour on our part, the Divine justice exacting this.*

In its decree on Original Sin, the Council speaks of "concupiscence," or the fuel of sin, which remains in the baptised, not as being sin, but as being left "*ad agonem*," for their trial, that they may give no consent to it, but by the grace of Jesus Christ, to their great profit, *resist and fight against it.* In the 6th sess. ch. xiii. on the "Gift of perseverance," the Council admonishes all Christians to work out their own salvation in fear and trembling, *in labours, in watchings, in alms-deeds, in prayers, in offerings, in fastings, in chastity*; for, knowing that they are regenerated, not as yet to glory, but only to the hope of it, *they ought to fear for the battle that still remains with the FLESH, the WORLD, and the DEVIL, in which they cannot be victorious, except by the grace of God they obey the Apostle, who says, "We are debtors not to the flesh, that we should live according to the flesh: for if ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live."*

Whatever a speculative writer, then, may be disposed to understand respecting the above briefly-mentioned conditions of salvation, as making it a thing easy or not easy of attainment, the all-important practical point for every single Christian must ever be to let nothing that can be said tempt him to overlook their existence, or hinder him from striving faithfully, by the grace of God, to observe them to the end. "If," as the Council of Trent says, "the Gospel is not a naked and absolute promise of salvation, but a promise conditional on the keeping of the commandments," the writer, whoever he may be, and whatever his intentions, cannot be a friend of the souls of men, or wisely zealous for the honour of God, if the effect of his words be to undermine, obscure, or enfeeble their sense of the binding nature of the duty of keeping of the commandments as the condition of entering into life.* "If any one affirm," says the Council of Trent (21st canon, *De Justif.*), "that Jesus Christ was given to man by God as a Redeemer in whom they should trust, and not also as a legislator whom they must obey, let

* The problem that fallen human nature will always seek to realise will be, how to secure salvation without the condition of keeping the commandments and breaking with the world. The popular Protestant doctrine of justification by faith is an invention, with this object in view, that has had a considerable run. The fear on the Catholic side is, lest the doctrine of the "easiness of salvation" prove a pitfall to souls in causing them to shut their eyes to the indispensable conditions of *keeping the commandments, and of renouncing the world during life*, leaving them nothing to trust to at the last but the precarious chances of a death-bed repentance and reconciliation.

him be anathema." The all-important point, then, in the question of salvation is, to take care to observe the conditions of obedience to the law of Christ on which it is offered, lest, if these be not sufficiently complied with, we fail to attain the salvation of which this obedience is the condition.

On coming to examine what these conditions really contain, it clearly appears,—with the exception of the evangelical counsels, in pursuance of which the monk outsteps the Christian in the world by divesting himself of property, the marriage state, and personal liberty,—that a Christian life in the world is essentially bound by all the conditions of monastic life. There is the same renunciation of the world to be made, the same commandments to be kept, the same Divine Scriptures to be studied, the same God to be adored, the same flesh and its desires to be crucified, the same battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, to be waged, the same virtues to be sought after, the same narrow path that leadeth to life to be patiently trod; and hence it is that to the Christian living in the world there is no sight which always has been, is, and will be, more welcome, more replete with edification and comfort, than that of the monk and nun who are faithful to their heavenly way of life.

Religious life in the Church is, in short, the very salt of the earth, the joy and glory of the militant Church, and the beacon of Christian life for those who have to work out their salvation in the Babel of the world. And hence it is, and with the deepest reason, that its great patriarch and legislator St. Benedict continues to be held in the highest honour and veneration by all Christian people; which honour time does but increase, by multiplying the number of the nations and people who bless the memory of the great and wise Saint, as his biographer calls him, Benedict in name and in grace.

H. FORMBY.

THE
LIFE AND THE MIRACLES
OF THE
HOLY FATHER BENEDICT,

FROM THE DIALOGUES OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

THE PARENTS AND BIRTHPLACE OF ST. BENEDICT.

THERE was once upon a time a man of venerable life, Benedict (blessed) by grace and by name, who gave proofs of the wisdom that is proper to age from his earliest childhood. As though he had passed over the period of youth at a single stride, he never gave his mind to the pursuit of any kind of amusement; but throughout his whole life he looked down upon the world, with all its charms, as something that was already decayed and withered up, although like others, if he had been so minded, he might have freely enjoyed it. He was born of a citizen-family, in the province of Nursia, and was sent by his parents to Rome to receive a liberal education. Seeing, however, how many entered upon their studies only to plunge into a frightful career of vice, no sooner had he advanced his first step forward in his worldly career than he drew it back, and resolved to stop short, fearing lest, if he but once suffered himself to taste its fruit of knowledge, he should be certain after that to throw himself headlong over its precipices into the abyss below.

CHAPTER II.

DESPISING THE PURSUIT OF LETTERS, THE SAINT BIDS ADIEU TO
THE WORLD.

THUS despising his career of study, quitting his home and his father's business, and desiring only to please God, he started off

in search of some way of leading a holy life. He went away fully knowing what he meant by his rejection of knowledge and by his contempt of learning. With the whole of his many and various actions I am not fully acquainted; the few things, however, that I am able to relate I have from the lips of four of his disciples: Constantine, a most reverend man, who succeeded him in the government of his monastery; Valentinian, who was for many years abbot of the Lateran monastery; Simplicius, who came third after him in the government of his congregation; to whom also may be added Honoratus, who is now prior of the house in which he was first a monk.

CHAPTER III.

HE MENDS THE BROKEN SIEVE BY HIS PRAYER.

WHEN our Saint had resolved upon giving up his studies, and seeking out some desert place, his nurse, who dearly loved him, was the only person who followed him.

They came to a place called Effide; and at the instance of many of the principal inhabitants, who pressed them to stay out of charity, they took up their abode in the church of St. Peter. Here the Saint's nurse had occasion to borrow a sieve from one of her neighbours for the purpose of winnowing a little wheat; and happening thoughtlessly to leave it upon a table, it was accidentally knocked off and broken right across into two pieces. The nurse, on her return, seeing the sieve in two pieces before her, began to weep immoderately at the thought of a thing which she had borrowed being broken. The good and pious little boy Benedict, seeing his nurse in tears, and feeling for her grief, taking the broken parts of the sieve away with him, betook himself with tears to pray to God. Rising from his prayer, he found the sieve close by his side, so sound and entire that not a vestige of a fracture could be discovered in it. Returning to his nurse, he soothed and consoled her, and restored the sieve into her hands sound and entire which he had taken away broken. The miracle soon became known to all the inhabitants of the place, and so won their admiration that they hung the sieve up in the entrance-gate of the church, that all people both present and to come might acknowledge the great state of perfection to which the young Benedict had already attained before he began to enter upon the religious life. The sieve remained hung up in the church for many years, in the sight of all the people, and continued there up to the time of the Lombards.

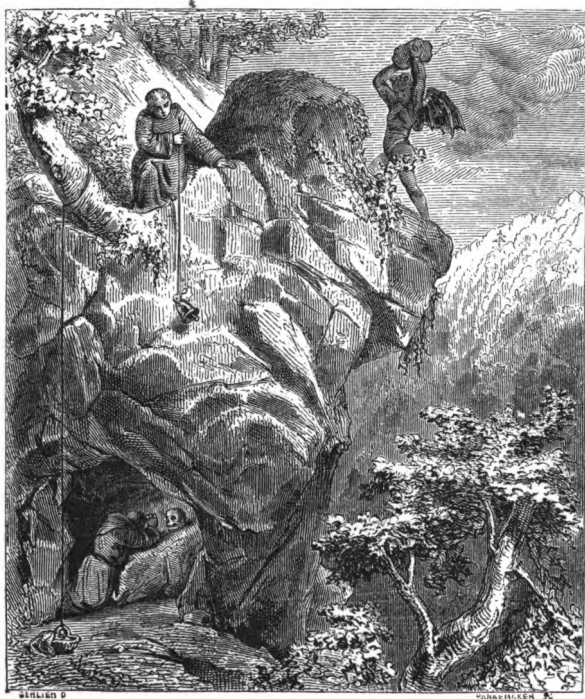
THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. I.—GRIEF OF HIS NURSE OVER THE BROKEN SIEVE.

The pious boy Benedict, feeling for his nurse's distress at the accident which had befallen the sieve, takes up the broken pieces; and after retiring to pray in private, he restores them to her perfect and whole.

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. II.—THE MONK ROMANUS AND THE DEVIL'S MALICE.

The devil, begrudging the charity of Romanus and the meal of St. Benedict, casts a stone at the bell and breaks it in pieces.

To face p. 7.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAINT RECEIVES THE MONASTIC HABIT.

BENEDICT's mind, however, being more bent upon suffering the evil things of the world than upon obtaining its good word, and as his desire was rather to be spent in hard labour for God than to be lifted up with the vain prizes of this life, he quietly gave the slip to his nurse, and made his escape to a solitary retreat known by the name of Sublacus (now Subiaco), distant about forty miles from the city of Rome, and watered by various little streams of cold clear water. The waters of the streamlets collected in a lake, from the foot of which issued a little river. As he was proceeding to this spot, Benedict was met by a certain monk named Romanus, who inquired of him whither he was going. When he was informed of the object of his search, Romanus both kept his secret and rendered him all the help in his power, giving to him the holy monastic habit, and furnishing him, as far as he was able, with all that he wanted.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVIL BREAKS THE BELL OF ROMANUS.

THE man of God, on arriving at this same spot, betook himself to a dark and narrow cave, where he remained unknown to every living soul except Romanus. This Romanus lived at no great distance off, in a monastery under the rule of Father Theodatus, and used at times piously to steal away from under the eye of his own spiritual father, and on certain days to bring to Benedict the bread which he had been able to lay hands upon for his own eating. From the cell, however, of Romanus to the cave where Benedict resided there was no regular path, and Romanus was in the habit of letting the provision of bread by a long string down the steep rock which overhung the cave. To this string he also attached a little bell, the sound of which was to give notice to the man of God that he might come out and take the food which had been brought to him. The old enemy, however, begrudging the charity of the one and the meal of the other, one day when he saw the bread being let down threw a stone at the bell and broke it. Romanus, however, did not leave off bringing the bread as usual at the stated times.

CHAPTER VI.

A PRIEST IS DIRECTED TO BRING FOOD TO ST. BENEDICT.

THE time was now come when it pleased Almighty God to take Romanus to his rest, and to exhibit the life of Benedict as a pattern to all men, that the candle, placed on its candlestick, might shine and give light to all in the house. The Lord, therefore, was pleased to appear in a vision to a certain priest, who lived at a distance, and who was preparing a dinner for himself for the Easter festivity, saying to him, "How is it that you are making ready good fare for yourself, while my servant yonder is being tortured with hunger?" The priest rose up there and then, and started off in the midst of the Paschal solemnities to the place pointed out to him with the victuals which he had made ready. There he searched for the man of God over hill and dale, and in the hollows of caves, until at length he found out his hiding-place in the cave. When they had made their prayer together, and had blessed the Almighty God, they sat down in each other's company; and after discoursing awhile on their past lives, the priest stopped, and said, "Come, let us take our food, for to-day is Easter-day." The man of God replied, "I know that it must be Easter, since I have been favoured with meeting you:" for from his long retirement from the ways of men, he was quite ignorant that the day was Easter-day. The worthy priest again insisted, saying, "Indeed it is quite true that to-day is the Paschal solemnity of the Lord's resurrection. It is not right for you to abstain from food; for I have myself been sent for this very purpose that we might partake of the gifts of the Almighty God in each other's company." They then blessed God, and took their repast; and when they had finished their meal and their conversation, the priest took his leave and returned to his church.

CHAPTER VII.

HE IS FOUND IN HIS CAVE BY SHEPHERDS.

ABOUT the same time, while he was still concealed in his cave, some shepherd-men from the neighbouring country discovered him. Seeing him, as he was dressed in his covering of skins, through the underwood, they took him for some beast or other; but at length, finding him to be a servant of God, many of them were converted from their own beast-like state of mind to the grace of religion. In this manner his name became known to

all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. And from that time it soon came to pass that he was sought after by great numbers, who brought to him corporal food, and in return took away the nourishment of spiritual life in their breasts.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS FORTITUDE IN OVERCOMING A TEMPTATION.

ON a certain day, when he was alone, the tempter came to him. A small and speckled bird of the thrush species began to fly about his face, and to make its importuning approaches near his lips, so that the holy man might, if he liked, have taken it in his hand; but on his making the sign of the cross the bird disappeared. A temptation, however, followed immediately upon the bird leaving him, so violent that the holy man had never before experienced any thing equal to it. The wicked spirit brought before his mind the vision of a female whom he had once seen; and so worked upon his imagination by the representation of her charms, that, overcome with the enticing fantasies, he was almost upon the point of quitting his solitude. At this critical moment, suddenly enlightened with a gift of grace from above, he returned to himself; and seeing the nettles and brambles growing thickly close to where he was standing, he threw off his outer garments, and cast himself into the midst of the sharp thorns and the stinging nettles, and there rolling himself backwards and forwards for a considerable time, he came out of them all torn and lacerated. But by the wounds in his skin he had freed his body from the disease of his mind, for he had forcibly turned pleasure into suffering; and by liberally punishing himself with outward pain, he extinguished the unlawful flame that burnt within, and thus overcame the sin by changing the nature of the smart. From this time forth, as he himself related to his disciples, he was so completely delivered from the like temptations that he never experienced any thing of them afterwards. Many now began to forsake the world, and to put themselves under his government. And, indeed, being now himself freed from temptation, who could be a fitter instructor in virtue for others? Thus Moses, in the Book of Exodus, by command of God, directs that the Levites should serve from the age of twenty-five and upwards; and that not till after their fiftieth year should they become keepers of the holy vessels.

PETER. I have some imperfect understanding of what you allude to; but I pray you make it clearer to me.

GREGORY. It is manifest, Peter, that in youth the temptations of the flesh are great; but after fifty the heat of the body

diminishes. Now the holy vessels are the souls of good men. As long as the elect are undergoing their trial it is necessary for them to be under obedience, and to serve, and to be knocked about at their work ; but when by reason of their age the fervour of temptation has given place to calmness, they are fit to be guardians of the holy vessels, that is to say, they may then become directors of souls.

PETER. I understand fully what you say, and you have quite explained the meaning of what you referred to. I pray you proceed with the life of the Saint which you have begun.

CHAPTER IX.

HE BREAKS THE GLASS CONTAINING POISON BY THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

HAVING overcome this temptation, the man of God, like a soil cleared of its thorns, and well tilled, began to bring forth such abundant fruits of virtue that the fame of his sanctity quickly spread itself far and wide. Not far off there was a monastery, whose abbot being dead, the whole convent repaired to the venerable man Benedict, and with earnest entreaties begged of him to become their abbot. He for a long time persisted in refusing, warning them that his manner of life and theirs could never agree. At length, however, overcome by their importunity, he consented. But no sooner had he begun to enforce in the monastery the observance of the regular life in such a manner that no one was now able to turn aside, as formerly, to the right hand or the left to any disorderly action at variance with the rule, than the brethren grew savage, and began to find great fault with themselves that they had asked such a man to become their head, whose uprightness and integrity was so directly contrary to their own perverseness. They saw quite clearly that they were now wholly shut out under his rule from their unlawful practices, which they grieved much to relinquish : and as they found it very hard to get rid of their old ideas and take up new ones, some among them began to plot how they could best contrive his death ; for the "ways of the just man are an abomination to the wicked." With this design in view, they mixed poison with his wine ; and when the glass cup which contained the poisoned wine was presented to their abbot to be blessed, according to the custom of the monastery, as he sat at table, Benedict, extending his hand, made the sign of the cross ; whereupon the glass, which was held at some little distance, broke at the exact moment, and fell into a number of fragments, as if, instead of the sign of the cross, it had received a sudden

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. III.—THE MONKS OF THE MONASTERY TRY TO POISON THE SAINT.

The Saint, after having broken the cup containing the poison with the sign of the Cross, rises from the table to quit the monastery.

blow from a stone. The man of God quickly perceived that the glass had death in its contents from its not being able to bear the sign of life. So, rising up with a mild and cheerful countenance, he called the brethren of the monastery together, and spoke to them thus: "Almighty God of His mercy forgive you, brethren; why have you sought to deal thus with me? Did I not give you full warning that my manner of life and yours would not agree? Go and seek a superior according to your liking, for you can have me no longer with you." This said, he forthwith returned to his beloved solitude, and lived there alone with himself in the sight of Him who seeth all things.

PETER. I do not clearly understand what you mean by saying "he lived with himself."

GREGORY. If the holy man had been bent upon keeping the monks—who with one mind had conspired against him, and whose habits of life were so different to his own—forcibly subject to his rule, it might perhaps have both taxed his strength too much and have broken his peace, and also possibly have drawn his own mind away from the light of contemplation; so that, over-busy with correcting the faults of others, he might have neglected his own, and thus have lost himself without gaining others. For as often as we are too much carried out of ourselves by over-busy thoughts, without ceasing to be ourselves, we are yet not as it were with ourselves; because, without minding our own proper business, we are wandering away to other things. Do we consider that he was "with himself" who went into a far country, and consumed the portion allotted to him, put himself out to service with one of the inhabitants, kept his hogs, and lastly suffered such hunger that he was ready to eat the very husks which he saw the swine feeding upon? Is it not written of him in the Scripture, that when he began to think again of the good things he had forfeited, he "*returned to himself*," saying, "How many hired servants of my father have abundance of bread!" If he had always been with himself, how came he to have to return to himself? I may well say, then, that this venerable man "lived with himself;" because, never losing sight of himself, he always kept a circumspect watch over himself in the presence of his Maker, and never suffered the eyes of his mind to wander out of his own control.

PETER. I would wish to ask what is to be understood of that which is written of the Apostle Peter, that when he was led by the angel out of prison, "*returning to himself*," he said, "Now I know of a surety that our Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hands of Herod, and all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

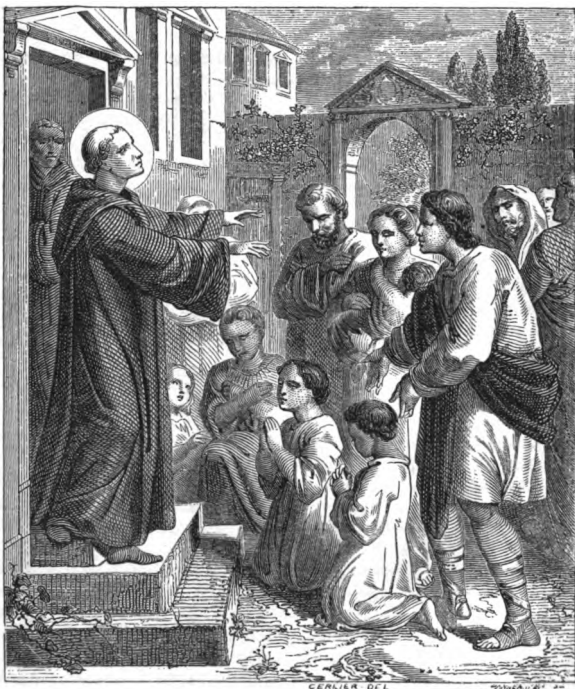
GREGORY. There are two ways, Peter, in which we are

carried out of ourselves : by the insecurity of our thoughts we may fall below ourselves ; and by the grace of contemplation we may be raised above ourselves. He who fed the swine, by his wandering of mind and uncleanness, fell beneath himself ; while he whom the angel released, and raised his mind to an ecstasy, was equally out of himself, only by being raised above himself. Both of them returned to themselves ; the one by recollecting himself and abandoning the error of his ways, the other by descending from the height of contemplation to the ordinary state of understanding in which he had previously been. The venerable Benedict, therefore, lived with himself in that solitude, inasmuch as he diligently kept himself within the limits of his own thoughts ; for as often as he was raised aloft by the fervour of contemplation, without doubt he left himself as it were beneath himself.

PETER. I like much what you say ; but still answer me, I pray you, ought he to have left the monks of whom he had once taken charge ?

GREGORY. In my opinion, Peter, a bad community may be tolerated where there are found at least some good who may be helped ; but where there is no hope of fruit, from the absence of any who are good, labour is not unfrequently thrown away upon the bad ; and especially is this true if there be any other occasions where we may hope to do God better service. Now who was there in the monastery whom the holy man should have staid to protect, when they all with one mind joined in the conspiracy against him ? There is much also that passes secretly in the minds of holy men which should not be left unnoticed ; for when they have reasons known to themselves for judging that their labour will be thrown away, they depart to some other place, there to employ themselves to more profit. Thus the famous preacher, who desired "to be dissolved and to be with Christ," to whom "to live was Christ, and to die was gain," who not only himself coveted trial and suffering, but animated others to endure the like,—he, I say, when persecuted at Damascus, himself procured both a cord and a basket by which to be let down from the wall, and by his own choice was let down secretly. Shall we say that Paul feared death, which he earnestly desired for the love of Christ, as appeareth by his own testimony ? No ; but because he saw what little fruit would come of his labours in that place, he spared himself hard labour there, in order to be able to labour with more fruit elsewhere. For this valiant champion of Almighty God would not be confined within narrow limits, but sought his battle-ground on the open field of the wide world. So, if you are ready to listen, you may now hear how few were the unteachable spirits whom the venerable Benedict left to their fate in comparison

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. IV.—PLACIDUS AND MAURUS BROUGHT TO ST. BENEDICT.

The senators and rich citizens of Rome begin to bring their children to St. Benedict to be educated under his care.

with the numbers whom he raised to life in other places from the death of the soul.

PETER. What you say is quite true, as both reason and the examples adduced prove ; but I pray you let us return to the life of this holy father.

CHAPTER X.

HE BUILDS MONASTERIES AND RECEIVES DISCIPLES.

As the holy man continued in this solitude, and daily advanced in virtue and in the power of working miracles, he gathered together a number of men in that place for the service of Almighty God. So that by the assistance of our Lord Jesus Christ he built there twelve monasteries ; in each of which he placed twelve monks, with their superiors, retaining a very few only with himself, whom he intended to instruct under his own eye. About this time a number of the influential Catholics of Rome began to seek him out, and to intrust their sons with him to be brought up for the service of God. Among these, Eutychius brought his son Maurus, and the senator Tertullus his son Placidus, both fine promising boys. Maurus, though the younger of the two, through his superior steadiness soon grew to be able to assist his master ; while Placidus still retained all the thoughtless gaiety of youth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAINT CORRECTS A VAGRANT BROTHER.

IN one of the monasteries which the holy man had built in the surrounding country, there was a certain monk who could not remain quiet at his prayers ; but so soon as he saw his brethren kneel and dispose themselves for their mental prayer, he would get up and wander about, busying himself with first one thing and then another. Having been often admonished for this by his own abbot, he was at length brought to the Saint, who sharply reprehended him for his folly. On his return to his monastery, however, he scarcely remembered for two days what had been said to him ; for at the time of prayer, on the third day, he fell back into his old habit of wandering about. When this was told to the servant of God by the same abbot, whom he had made superior of the monastery, he said, " I will come myself and reform him." When he had come to the monastery ; and when the brethren, after the office was over, were betaking

themselves to their mental prayer,—he observed a little black boy pulling the monk out by the extremity of his sleeve. On this he remarked in an under-tone to Pompeianus the abbot, and to Maurus, saying, “Do you not see now who it is that is drawing this monk out?” They answered that they could not see any thing. “Let us join in prayer, that you may be able to see who it is that this monk is following.” After they had continued their prayers for two days, Maurus saw the little black boy; but Pompeianus, the abbot of the monastery, was not able to see him.

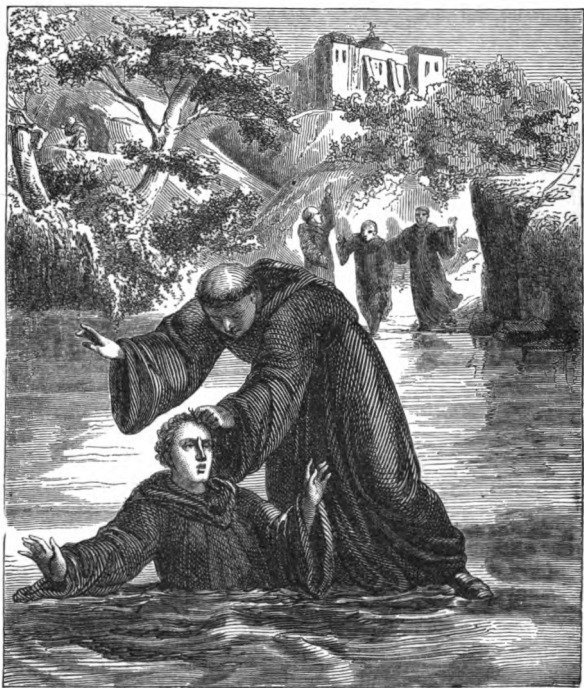
The following day, when the Saint had finished his prayers, he went out of the oratory; and finding the monk wandering about, he gave him a beating with his staff proportioned to his blindness and obstinacy. From this time the brother never experienced any further molestation from the little black imp, and was able to remain fixed at his prayers; and thus the old enemy never again dared to gain any power over his mind, just as if he had himself received the blows from the Saint’s staff.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SAINT MAKES A SPRING OF WATER COME FORTH FROM THE ROCK.

OF the monasteries which he had founded in that neighbourhood three were built upon the upper range of the mountain; which made it not only very laborious for the monks to be forced to go down to fetch up water from the lake, but the very going down itself was a continual danger from the narrowness and steepness of the path. Hereupon the religious of the three monasteries came together in a body to Benedict, the servant of God, and said to him, “It is very hard work for us to have to go down to the lake every day to fetch water, and therefore it is quite necessary to remove the site of the monasteries.” The holy man listened kindly to their complaints, and dismissed them; and the same night, taking the boy Placidus, of whom I have recently made mention, with him, he went up the ascent on which the monasteries stood, and remained there for a considerable time in prayer. When his prayer was finished, he placed there three blocks of stone to mark the spot, and then, unobserved by any of the brethren, returned to his own monastery. On the following day the brethren came to him to renew their complaints for the want of water; when the holy man said to them, “Return, and on that part of the rock where you shall find three stones piled up one upon the other begin to excavate; for God Almighty is able, even on the summit of such a moun-

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. V.—PLACIDUS SAVED FROM DROWNING BY MAURUS.

Maurus, at the command of the Saint, walks upon the water and saves Placidus from being drowned in the lake into which he had tumbled.

tain, to bring forth water for you in order graciously to spare you the labour of fetching it from such a way off." They went, and found the particular part of the rock which Benedict had bid them search for already exuding water ; and no sooner had they made their excavation than the cavity became filled with water. The spring also proved to be so abundant as from that time forth to form a little rivulet, finding its way down to the lake below.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IRON HEAD OF A WOODMAN'S HATCHET IS RESTORED TO THE HAFT.

AT another time a certain poor Goth, desirous to lead a religious life, came to Benedict to be converted, and was most kindly received. One day he desired the brethren to give him a hatchet with which to clear away the brambles from a spot intended for a garden. The place which the Goth had been told to clear overhung the lake ; and as the man was hewing right and left at the briers with all his might, the iron head of the hatchet flew off the handle, and fell into so deep a part of the lake that there was no hope of recovering it. The man, frightened at the thought of being answerable for the loss, went in haste in search of Maurus to tell him of the mischance, expressing his sorrow for his own share of the blame. Maurus lost no time in giving Benedict information of what had happened. Immediately the man of God came himself to the lake, and taking the handle of the hatchet out of the hand of the Goth, he threw it into the water ; when, to the surprise of all, the iron head rose from the bottom and fitted itself on to the handle as before. Benedict caused the instrument to be given back to the Goth, saying to him, " Here is the hatchet ; go on with your work, and do not give way to grief."

CHAPTER XIV.

PLACIDUS IS RESCUED FROM DROWNING IN THE LAKE.

ON one day, as the venerable Benedict was in his cell, the boy Placidus, who has been before mentioned as one of his monks, went out to draw water from the lake ; and as he was carelessly letting the vessel down into the water he slipped and fell into the lake himself, and was carried away in a very short time by the stream quite a bow-shot from the bank. The man of God, however, became aware in his cell of what had happened ; and hastily

summoning Maurus, he said, "Brother Maurus, make haste and run, for that boy who went to draw water has fallen into the lake, and the stream has already carried him to some distance." What follows is most marvellous, and unheard of since the days of St. Peter. Maurus, kneeling down for the benediction of his superior, ran off as he was commanded to the spot where the boy had fallen into the water; and not knowing but that he was all the while on *terra firma*, he ran over the water, and seizing Placidus by the hair, made haste back. Coming to himself the moment he had regained the bank, he looked back, and perceiving that he had been running upon the water, began to be quite frightened at the thought of having done what he would not before have presumed to think possible. On his return to his superior, he told him all that had happened; upon which the venerable Benedict attributed it, not to his own merits, but to the obedience of his monk. Maurus, on the contrary, averred that it had been done entirely in compliance with his superior's command, and that he could have had no share in a miracle which he had performed without knowing what he was doing. As this mutual and friendly contest of humility was going on, the boy stepped in to decide the question by saying, "As I was being drawn out of the water I saw the sheepskin of the abbot over my head, and believed myself being taken out of the water by him."

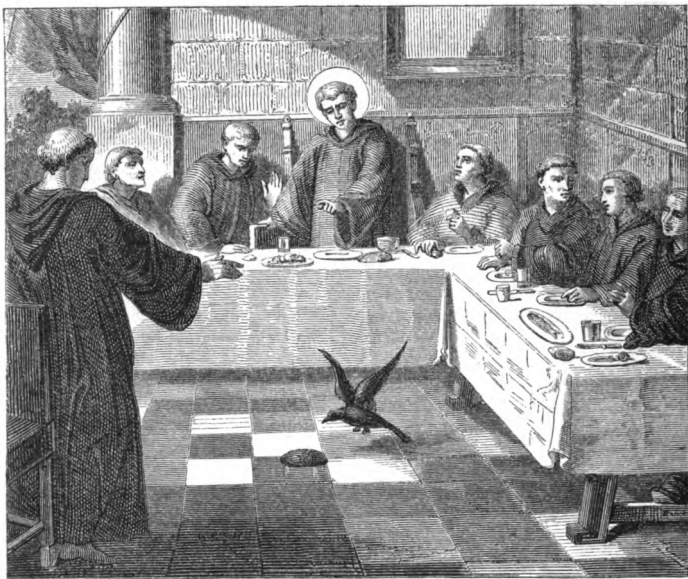
PETER. These are wonderful things that you are telling me, and full of edification for great numbers of people. For my own part, the more I hear of this holy man's miracles the more I desire to hear.

CHAPTER XV.

A CROW CARRIES AWAY A POISONED LOAF.

IN the course of time a great fervour and zeal for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ began to spread itself far and wide throughout the surrounding country; and as many were now giving up their secular way of life to put themselves under the light yoke of our Redeemer (as the custom is with bad people to begrudge others the good they have no desire to possess themselves), the parish-priest of a neighbouring church, one Florentius by name, the grandfather of our Florentius the sub-deacon, instigated by the malice of the old enemy, began to oppose the virtuous proceedings of the Saint, to speak ill of his way of life, and to dissuade as many as he could from coming to see him. Perceiving, however, that he could do nothing effectual to impede the Saint's progress, and that the reputation of his mode of life kept continually on the increase, and that great numbers were

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. VI.—THE CROW AND THE POISONED LOAF.

The Saint commands the crow which he was in the habit of feeding every day to carry away the poisoned loaf sent by Florentius.

To face p. 25.

constantly being moved by the fame of his sanctity to embrace a better way of life, the fire of envy burning more and more within him, he grew worse and worse; for he would himself gladly have enjoyed a like reputation, though he had no mind at all to earn it by an equally laudable life. To such a degree did he become blinded with envy, that he was brought at last to send a poisoned loaf to the servant of God, as if to ask his blessing. The man of God received it with thanks; but the poison it contained did not escape his observation. A crow had long been in the habit of coming out of the adjoining forest about the time of his dinner-hour, and of receiving food from his hand. When this crow came according to its custom, the man of God threw down before it the loaf which the parish-priest had sent to him, and commanded the crow, saying, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, take this loaf, and carry it away to some place where it will be impossible for any man to find it." Then the crow, opening its mouth and stretching out its wings, began to flutter round about the loaf, and to croak as if it wished to express its desire to obey, and at the same time to show its want of power to put the commands it had received into execution. The man of God observing this, repeated his command several times, saying, "Do not be afraid; lift it up, lift it up, and lay it down where it can never be found." After much difficulty, the crow at length fixed its beak into the loaf, lifted it up, and went away. In the course of three hours the crow came back, having deposited its burden as directed; and then it received its accustomed meal from the hand of the Saint.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WICKED DEVICE OF FLORENTIUS.

THE venerable father, however, perceiving the virulent animosity exhibited by the parish-priest against his way of life, was more pained on the priest's account than on his own. Florentius, finding himself disappointed in his design on the bodily life of the master, began to try what he could do against the souls of his disciples. With this intent, he sent seven young girls in a state of nudity into the garden of the cell in which Benedict lived, that by their immodest sports and wanton gestures they might tempt the minds of the religious; which the holy man observing from his cell, and fearing for his scholars, who were still mere youths, reflecting also that the whole was done out of spite to himself alone, he yielded, and withdrew himself. Putting the oratories and all that he had built in order, and assigning them to the care of superiors whom he selected, he took a few

monks with him, and changed his place of abode. No sooner, however, had the man of God, through his humility, commenced removing himself out of the way than the wrath of the omnipotent God fell heavily upon his persecutor.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PUNISHMENT AND RUIN OF FLORENTIUS.

FOR when the above-mentioned priest heard, to his great joy and delight, as he was standing in a room of his house enjoying the sunshine, of the departure of Benedict, the particular room where he was suddenly fell down, and crushed him to death, all the rest of the house remaining sound and entire. This the Saint's disciple Maurus thought fitting to signify forthwith to the venerable father Benedict, who was scarce ten miles on his way, sending messengers after him to say, "Return, for the priest that persecuted you has been killed." On hearing this news, the man of God gave way to great lamentations, as well because his enemy was dead as because his disciple had exulted over his death. The upshot of the matter was, that he enjoined a severe penance upon his disciple, because that in sending him word of what had happened he had presumed to rejoice over the death of an enemy.

PETER. These are wonderful strange things which you relate. For in the drawing water out of the rock methinks I see Moses; in the iron that rose up from the bottom and swam on the water, Eliseus; in the walking on the water, Peter; in the obedience of the crow, Elias; in his grief over the death of an enemy, David: and thus I discover united in him the spirit of all the just.

GREGORY. The man of God, Benedict, had within him the Spirit of the one God, which by the grace of free redemption hath filled the hearts of all the elect; as St. John saith, "He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into this world;" of whom it is also written, "We all have received of His fullness." For the holy men of God, indeed, were able themselves to receive the gift of virtues from their Lord, but could not pass them on to others. But the Lord Himself gave the power of working wonders to the lowly, promising to His enemies the sign of Jonas; that is, that He would die in the sight of the proud, and rise again in the sight of the humble, that the former might have something given them to see which they would despise, and the others something which they might reverence and love. By which mystery it has been brought to pass, that while the proud saw only His ignominious death,

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. VII.—THE SAINT BREAKS TO PIECES THE IDOL ON MONTE CASINO.

The Saint destroys the temple and statue of Apollo, and builds on the spot where it stood chapels to St. Martin and to St. John the Apostle.

To face p. 29.

the humble have received the glory of a power superior to death.

PETER. I pray you tell me to what places the holy man removed after this, and whether he worked any miracles in them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SAINT OVERTHROWS THE IDOL ON MOUNT CASINO, AND BUILDS HIS CHURCH.

THE holy man by his removal changed his place of abode, but not his enemy. He endured after this still worse assaults, inasmuch as he began now to have the very author himself of all malice openly in the field against him. The military station called Casino is situated on the side of a lofty mountain; extending itself in the manner of an amphitheatre, it forms a convenient site for a military position, and rising upwards to the height of about three miles, it seems to touch the clouds with its summit. On the top of this mountain stood a most ancient shrine, where the silly natives, according to an old heathen custom, were in the habit of worshipping Apollo. Every where around groves had sprung up dedicated to the worship of devils, in which frantic crowds of heathens revelled over their sacrilegious sacrifices. The man of God, on arriving there, broke the idol in pieces, overturned the altar, set fire to the groves, and in the very temple itself of Apollo he built a chapel dedicated to St. Martin, and on the spot where the altar of Apollo had stood he raised another dedicated to St. John. The surrounding multitude in the mean time was being called to the faith by continual preaching. The old enemy, however, not being able to endure these things in silence, appeared, not in secret or in dreams, but openly before the eyes of the holy father, and complained with loud cries of the violence that was being done to him; so that the brethren frequently heard his words though they were unable to see his shape: for, as the venerable father related to his disciples, the old enemy showed himself to his bodily eyes in a horrible shape, as it were on fire, and raging against him with his eyes and mouth bursting forth flames. The words he used, indeed, they all heard: for at first he would call him by name; and when the man of God gave him no answer, he would break out into abuse: for when he had cried out for some time, "Blessed Benedict," and found that no answer was given to him, he changed his tone, and exclaimed, "Thou cursed, and not blessed, Benedict, what hast thou to do with me? Why dost thou trouble me?" But it is now time to see what new kind of difficulties the old enemy threw into the way

of the servant of God, giving him causes of trouble with the best will imaginable, but, most sorely against his will, furnishing him with occasions of victory.

CHAPTER XIX.

BY HIS PRAYER HE DRIVES AWAY A DEVIL THAT SAT UPON A STONE,
AND RENDERED IT IMMOVABLE.

On a certain day, as the brethren were engaged in building the cells of their monastery, there lay a particular stone in their way, which they determined to raise and to use for their building. When two or three had tried to move it, and found themselves not able, several more came to help them. The stone, however, remained just as immovable as if it held to the earth by invisible roots; giving the monks thereby plainly to understand that the enemy himself in his own person was sitting upon it, since so many of their number were unable by their joint strength to move it. Having made many efforts all in vain, at last they sent for the man of God to come to drive the enemy away with his prayers, in order that they might be able to lift up the stone. The Saint presently came; and after praying, he made the sign of the cross over the stone, whereupon in an instant they were able to raise it just as if it had never been of any weight at all.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW AN ILLUSION OF FIRE WAS DISPELLED BY THE SIGN OF THE
CROSS.

THE man of God then desired the brethren to excavate the earth in the place where the stone lay. When they had proceeded to some depth, they happened to stumble upon a brazen idol, which was accidentally thrown aside for the moment into the kitchen. Presently there seemed, as it were, a flame to arise out of the kitchen; and to the eyes of all the brethren it appeared as if the entire building was on fire. As they were busy bustling about, trying to throw water on the flames to put them out, the man of God, attracted by the unusual noise, came to the spot. Observing that the eyes of the community, and not his own, were deceived by an appearance of fire, he bent down his head in prayer; then, calling the brethren to him whom he perceived to be thus deluded, he admonished them to make the sign of the cross over their eyes, that they might

be able to see that the kitchen-buildings were perfectly safe, and that the appearance of fire which the enemy had produced was nothing but a cheat.

CHAPTER XXI.

HE CURES A BOY CRUSHED BY THE TUMBLING DOWN OF A WALL.

AGAIN, as the brethren were raising their wall a little higher for some reason of convenience, and the man of God was at his prayers in his cell, the old enemy appeared to him, and, in an insulting manner, told him that he had better go to his community at their work. The man of God immediately sent a messenger to his brethren to warn them that the wicked spirit was about to pay them a visit. The bearer of the message had scarcely finished speaking, when the evil spirit overturned the wall and nearly crushed to death one of the younger monks, the son of a senator, in the ruins. This, as may be supposed, occasioned the greatest sorrow and trouble to the brethren, not for the damage done to the wall, but for the bruises their brother had sustained; and they lost no time in sending word to their venerable father Benedict. The Saint directed them to bring the sufferer to him; and to such a degree had the fragments of the wall not only bruised the sufferer's limbs but also fractured his bones, that he could only bear to be moved in a litter. The man of God, on their arrival, directed them to lay the patient upon the mat on which he was in the habit of praying; and turning all the brethren out of his cell, he fell to his prayers with even more than his usual vigour. Wonderful to relate, an hour had not passed before he sent the sufferer back to his work as safe and sound as he had ever been in his whole life; so that the very person over whose catastrophe the old enemy had come to make a mock at Benedict, was now at work finishing the wall together with the rest of the community.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SAINT SEES IN SPIRIT CERTAIN EXCESSES OF HIS BRETHREN.

DURING these things the man of God began to acquire the spirit of prophecy, and both to foretell things to come and to inform those that were about him of things that were passing at a distance.

It was the custom of the monastery, that whenever any of the brethren were sent abroad on any business they should

never accept any thing to eat or to drink. As the observance of this regulation was enforced with no little strictness, it happened one day that two of the brethren went out upon some errand, and were forced to stay out later than usual. They had found out a pious lady, in whose house they had been offered and had taken some refreshment. Returning late to the monastery, they asked, according to custom, for the father's benediction. Instead of giving it to them, he at once asked them, "Where was it that you took refreshment?" They answered, "Nowhere." "Why do you tell lies?" replied the father. "Did not you go into the house of such and such a lady? did you not take such and such food there? did you not drink such and so many glasses of wine?" As the venerable father was enumerating thus circumstantially the hospitable treatment of the lady, the kind of food and the quantity of liquor, the two brethren, acknowledging all that they had done, fell trembling at his feet and confessed themselves guilty. The father immediately pardoned their fault, judging that they would not be likely to attempt any thing of the kind again through relying upon his absence, now that they had this proof of his being present with them in spirit.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HE REPROVES A CERTAIN VISITOR FOR BREAKING HIS FAST.

THE Brother of Valentinian, a monk who has been already mentioned, though living in the world was yet a very devout man. Once every year he was in the habit of leaving his home and coming, fasting all the way, to his brother's cell in order to see him, and to obtain the Saint's blessing. On a certain day, as he was making one of these journeys to the monastery, another traveller who was carrying a stock of eatables came up with him, and offered himself for company on the way. When it was growing a little late in the day, the traveller said, "Come, brother, let us take something to eat, or we shall be tired out." The other replied, "No, brother, that I cannot do; I have always made a practice of keeping my fast till I reach Father Benedict." Receiving this reply, his fellow-traveller said nothing more for the time; but when they had gone on a little farther, his companion again advised him to stop and take something; he still persisted in refusing, for he had made up his mind to come to his journey's end fasting. His friend was silent, and consented to go a part of the way farther with him without stopping to eat. When they had proceeded some considerable distance farther, and both began to find them-

selves really tired, they came upon a nice green meadow and a spring of water, which looked exceedingly nice and tempting as a place for stopping and taking refreshment. His companion now said, "See, here is a beautiful spring and a meadow; what a nice place it will be for stopping to rest ourselves and taking something to eat! after which we can continue our journey all the stronger." As the proposition sounded highly agreeable to the ear, while the spot looked particularly attractive to the eye, overcome by the third invitation, he consented, and began to eat. At an advanced hour in the evening he reached his brother's cell, and on being presented to the venerable Father Benedict he asked for his blessing. The holy man, however, instead of giving it to him, began to take him to task for what he had done on the road, saying, "What is this brother; how is it that the wicked spirit, who spoke to you through your fellow-traveller, the first time failed to persuade you, the second time failed, but the third time succeeded, and brought you to do what he wished?" The visitor then, acknowledging his infirmity of purpose and his fault, fell down before the Saint's feet, and began to be ashamed, and to accuse himself with all the more vehemence from the knowledge that, in spite of the distance that separated them, he had done the wrong in the very sight of Benedict.

PETER. I discover in the heart of the holy man the spirit of Eliseus, who, notwithstanding distance, was still present with his disciple.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SAINT DETECTS THE DISGUISE OF THE KING.

GREGORY. Peter, I pray you have patience for a while, and be silent until you have heard what is far more wonderful.

During the time of the invasion of the Goths, Totila, their king, hearing that the holy man had the spirit of prophecy, took a fancy to go to the monastery; and after going part of the way, he stopped, and sent forward a messenger to announce his coming. When he had received an answer from the monastery that he might come at his pleasure, Totila, knowing his own propensity to deception, resolved to try by the test of an experiment whether or no the man of God possessed the spirit of prophecy. Among the attendants was a certain man called Riggo, to whom Totila gave his own sandals, and causing him to be decked out in the rest of the royal robes, he ordered him to go and pretend to be the king before the man of God. He sent also in his suite three attendants who were known to be

continually about his own person, viz. Vulteric, Ruderic, and Blindine, who were to walk by his side, and appear to treat him as king before the eyes of the servant of God. Besides these he sent a large body of other followers, in order that, misled by the attentions which they were all instructed to pay him, and the purple robes, there might be no room left to doubt of his being the king.

In this disguise, with the whole body of his attendants, Riggo entered the monastery; but no sooner was he come within hearing of the man of God than the latter cried out, "Put off, son, put off thy wearing apparel; it is not thine." Riggo, struck with fear at the thought that he had had the presumption to try to impose on so great a man, fell with his face to the earth, and all who had accompanied him into the presence of the man of God were struck to the ground with consternation. On their rising, they did not dare to approach the man of God, but returned as fast as possible to their king, telling him in great affright how quickly they had been found out in their deception.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SAINT FORETELLS TO TOTILA WHAT IS TO COME.

TOTILA upon this came in person to the man of God; and so soon as he saw him seated at a distance, not having the courage to come near, he bowed himself to the ground. The holy man for the second and third time bade him rise. Totila, however, did not dare to raise himself in the presence of the Saint, until Benedict, the servant of Christ, kindly came in person to the king, and lifting him up from the ground, he began to rebuke him for his conduct, and in a few words foretold to him what was to come to pass, saying, "Thou hast done already many wicked things, thou art still doing many; wilt thou never leave off doing thus wickedly? Behold, thou art about to enter Rome, and to pass over the sea; thy reign will last nine years, and in the tenth thou shalt die." The king on hearing these words was vehemently terrified, and took his leave asking the Saint's prayers and blessing. From that time forward he became much less cruel. He entered Rome, and from thence passed into Sicily; and in the tenth year of his reign, by the judgment of Almighty God, he lost both his kingdom and his life.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SAINT'S PROPHECY RESPECTING THE CITY OF ROME.

BESIDES the visit of Totila, the Bishop of Canusina was in the habit of visiting the servant of God, by whom he was much beloved on account of his virtuous life. Conferring together on the impending entry of Totila into Rome, and the threatened destruction of the city, the Bishop said, "This man will so utterly destroy the city that it will never have another inhabitant." The man of God replied, "Rome will not be uprooted by these heathens; but it will waste away in itself from the effects of lightning, tempests, and earthquakes." The truth of this prophecy is already sufficiently evident to us at the present day; for in this city we see the walls fallen to pieces, the houses thrown down, the churches destroyed by tempestuous winds, and every day we may observe the buildings decay and fall into ruin. I had this from Honoratus, the Saint's disciple; though he admitted that he did not learn it himself direct from the Saint's own mouth, but assured me most positively that he was told it by the brethren.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HE CURES ONE POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL.

ABOUT the same time a certain cleric of the Church of Aquin was grievously vexed by a devil. Constantius, the venerable Bishop of the Church, had sent him round on a pilgrimage to the shrines of a great many martyrs that he might be healed. The holy martyrs, however, would not obtain for him the grace of being cured, that they might the better make known the gifts of grace that Benedict had received. The afflicted cleric was therefore brought to Benedict, the servant of God, who with prayers to our Lord Jesus Christ presently drove out the enemy from the possessed man. Having delivered him from the demon, he said to him, "Go, and never again eat flesh, or presume to come to receive holy orders; for on the day on which you dare to receive holy orders, you shall instantly come again under the jurisdiction of the devil." The cleric departed perfectly restored; and as punishments make a deep impression so long as the memory of them is fresh, for a while he carefully observed all that the servant of God had commanded him. But when many years had passed away, and all those who at the time were in holy orders had died off, and others younger

than himself were being ordained and placed over him, the cleric grew careless; and ceasing to mind what the servant of God had said to him, he went and received ordination. Here-upon the devil, who had been driven out of him, recovered his power over him, and never from that time ceased to harass him till he had fairly tormented the life out of him.

PETER. This holy man, I perceive, understood the secret decrees of God, in that he perceived this cleric to have been given over to the devil that he might not dare to come to receive holy orders.

GREGORY. Wherefore should he not know the secrets of God who has kept the commandments of God, seeing that it is written, "He that adhereth to God is of one spirit with Him"?

PETER. If he who adhereth to our Lord becomes one spirit with Him, how comes the same excellent Preacher to say, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" for it seems altogether unlikely that he who is made one with another should not know his mind?

GREGORY. Holy men, so far as they are one or united with God, are not ignorant of His mind. For the same Apostle saith, "Who knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is in him?" "So the things that are of God no man knoweth but the Spirit of God." But that he might show himself to be possessed of some knowledge of the things of God, he has added, "But we have received, not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God." Hence he saith again, "That which the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him;" but to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit.

PETER. If, then, the things appertaining to God were revealed to the Apostle by the Spirit of God, what meaneth he by this preamble, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are His judgments, and His ways unsearchable!"? But while I am saying this, another question crosses my path. For David the prophet, addressing himself to the Lord, saith, "In my lips I have uttered all the judgments of Thy mouth;" and whereas it is a lesser thing to comprehend or know than to utter or to declare, what is the reason which makes St. Paul affirm the judgments of God to be incomprehensible, while David professes, not only that he knows them, but that he declares them with his lips?

GREGORY. I have already briefly answered your doubts on both these points, when I said that holy men, so far as they are one with God, are not ignorant of the mind of our Lord: for

all who devoutly follow our Lord, are so far united with God in their devotion; but in regard that they are pressed down with the weight of this corruptible body, they are not wholly with God. So far, then, as they are united with God, they have a knowledge of His secret judgments; and so far as they are not one with God, they are ignorant of them. And because they do not perfectly penetrate into His secrets, they bear witness that His judgments are incomprehensible. But they who in spirit adhere to God, by reason of their adherence know His judgments, either by the sacred words of Scripture or by hidden revelations, so far as they are capable. These, therefore, they know and declare, while they are ignorant of those which God concealeth. Hence the Prophet David, when he had spoken of having declared the judgments of God, immediately added, "of Thy mouth," as if he meant to explain himself to this effect, "The judgments which I have been able to know and to declare are those which I have known Thee to have uttered; for as to those judgments which Thou hast not spoken, these are doubtless hidden far beyond the reach of my knowledge." In this way the saying of the Apostle agreeth with that of the Prophet; for the judgments of God are both incomprehensible, and yet those which proceed from His mouth may nevertheless be declared by the lips of men. Thus those which have been promulgated by God may be known by men, while those which God has concealed can never be known.

PETER. You have solved all my difficulties, and reconciled the passages I could not explain; and if there remain any thing more to relate concerning the miracles of this holy man, I pray you to proceed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HE PREDICTS THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS MONASTERY.

GREGORY. A certain nobleman, named Theoprobos, had been converted by the admonitions of the holy father Benedict, and remained on terms of the greatest intimacy with him in consequence of his virtuous life. On a certain day, when this nobleman entered his cell, he found him lamenting most bitterly. As he remained for some time waiting, and found him not shedding tears in the midst of prayer, as was his custom, but crying from excess of grief, he began to inquire what could be the cause of such extreme sorrow. The man of God replied, "The whole of this monastery, which I have built, and all that I have prepared for the brethren, is to be given over by the judgment of the Almighty God into the hands of the heathen; and it is with difficulty that I have prevailed that the lives of

the brethren should be granted me." Theoprobos heard his prophecy, and we have seen its fulfilment in the recent destruction of the monastery by the Lombards. For quite lately, in the middle of the night, while the brethren were asleep, the Lombards broke in upon the convent; and though they ransacked and plundered every thing before them, they did not lay hands upon a single inmate. But God Almighty fulfilled all that He had promised to his servant Benedict,—that although He gave their goods into the hands of the heathen, He would keep watch over their lives; in which I perceive the blessed Benedict to resemble Saint Paul, whose ship, with all its goods, being lost, it pleased God to console him by granting to him the lives of all that were with him in the ship.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SAINT SEES IN THE SPIRIT THE COMMISSION OF A THEFT.

ON a certain day, our friend Exhilaratus, of whose conversion you have since heard, was sent by his master to carry to the monastery two small wooden vessels of wine, of the kind which the people call flagons, for a present to the Saint. He went according to command, but while on the way he hid one of the flagons by the roadside. The man of God, from whose observation things were not wont to escape because they were done far away from his presence, gratefully accepted the one flagon which was brought to him; and as the bearer was taking his departure, he cautioned him, saying, "My son, beware how you drink out of the flagon which you have hidden; lean it carefully on one side, and you will see what there is contained in it." The youth departed from the Saint in great confusion; but wishing to test the truth of what he had heard, he returned to the spot where he had hidden the flagon, and there, leaning it over upon its side, a serpent immediately came out of it. The boy Exhilaratus upon this became terribly frightened, and was struck with great compunction for the evil that he had committed.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SAINT REPROVES A CERTAIN MONK FOR RECEIVING THE PRESENT OF SOME NAPKINS.

AT no great distance from the monastery was a village in which a great number of people had been converted from idolatry to

the knowledge of God through the exhortations of Benedict. There was also in the village a community of religious women, to which the servant of God occasionally sent the brethren of his monastery to give religious instruction. On a certain day, when, according to his custom, he had sent one of the monks, after the instruction had been given, the brother, on being requested by the nuns, received the present of a few napkins, which he placed in the folds of his habit and went his way. No sooner was he returned to the monastery than the man of God began to upbraid him with the greatest vehemence and bitterness, saying to him, "How is this, brother, that iniquity hath thus taken possession of thee?" The monk was stupefied; for having forgotten all about the napkins, he did not know for what it was that he was thus taken to task. The Saint then said, "Was I not present with thee when thou didst receive the napkins from the nuns, and when thou didst hide them in the folds of thy habit?" The monk, falling at his feet, confessed that he had done foolishly, and cast away the napkins which he had concealed in his habit.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SAINT SEES THE SECRET THOUGHTS OF ONE OF THE MONKS.

ONE day, late in the evening, as the venerable Father was taking his evening meal, the brother whose office it was to stand by holding a light happened to be the son of a lawyer. As the man of God was busy eating, and the monk was holding the candle, the latter began silently to nourish in his mind a spirit of self-conceit, and as it were to say to himself, "Who is this man, that I should wait at his table, and attend upon him to hold his candle?" and, "Who am I, that I should demean myself to be his servant?" The man of God, turning towards the monk, began to take him severely to task, saying, "Make the sign of the cross on thy heart, brother. What is it that you are saying to yourself? Come, make the sign of the cross quickly." Then summoning the brethren into the room, he told them to take away the candle from him, bidding the monk give up his post and come and sit down quietly close by his own seat. The monk, on being afterwards asked by the rest of the brotherhood what it was that he had at the time in his mind, confessed to the spirit of pride by which he had been for the moment possessed, and to all the words that he had been saying secretly to himself in his thoughts against the man of God. By this it was easy to be perceived that nothing could escape the knowledge of the venerable Benedict, to whose ears

the language of the most secret thoughts contrived to find its way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

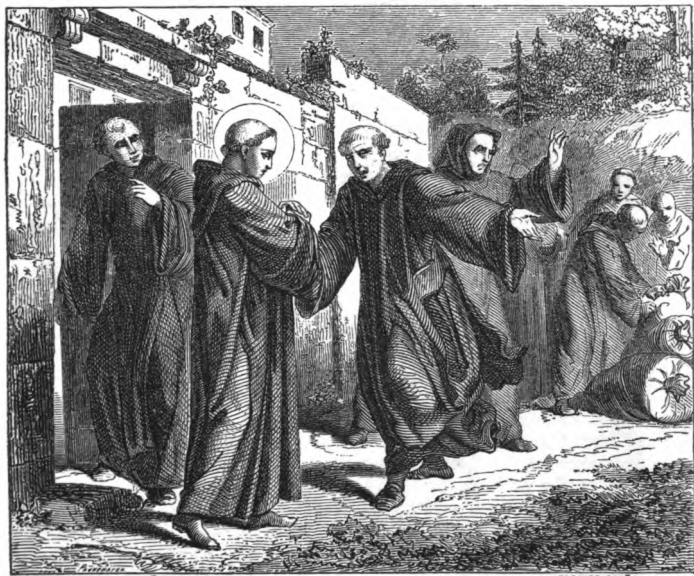
A SUPPLY OF MEAL IS BROUGHT MIRACULOUSLY.

At another time also a famine happened to prevail throughout the above-mentioned region of Campania, and there was a great scarcity of food. The wheat in Benedict's monastery was all consumed, and of the baked bread there remained no more than five loaves for the meal of the brethren. When the venerable father saw them looking dismayed, he lost no time in correcting them for their pusillanimity by a gentle rebuke, and in restoring their courage by a promise of help, addressing them thus: "Why is your mind cast down by this scarcity of bread? To-day, indeed, we have but little; but to-morrow we shall have abundance." On the following day, two hundred bushels of flour were found in sacks before the chief gate of the monastery, which Almighty God sent to them, though by whom remains to this day unknown. As soon as the brothers had seen the sacks, returning thanks to God, they learned henceforth to have no further doubt of being well supplied even in their greatest need.

PETER. Tell me, I pray you, is it to be believed that the spirit of prophecy was always present with this servant of God, or did it fill his mind only at broken intervals?

GREGORY. The spirit of prophecy, Peter, does not at all times enlighten the minds of the prophets; for, as it is written of the Holy Spirit, "He breatheth where He will," so it is to be known that He breatheth also when He will. For from hence it is that Nathan, on being consulted by the king whether he could build a temple to the Lord, first assented and afterwards forbade the building. Hence also it is that Eliseus, when he saw the woman weeping, and knew not the cause of her grief, said to his servant, who stood in her way, "Let her alone; for her soul is in bitterness, and the Lord hath concealed it from me, and hath not revealed it unto me." For thus the Almighty God of His great mercy and foresight has disposed; and in that He sometimes gives and sometimes withholds the spirit of prophecy, He keeps the minds of those who prophesy raised upon high, at the same time that He provides for their humility, that whenever they receive the Spirit of God they may learn what it is they owe to God; and again, when they find themselves deprived of His Spirit, they may understand what they are of themselves.

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. VIII.—MIRACULOUS SUPPLY OF GRAIN FOR THE MONASTERY.

The brethren in the morning are astonished at finding a miraculous supply of sacks of grain at the gate of the monastery.

To face p. 40.

PETER. It stands to reason that the thing is as you say. I pray you, proceed to tell what else you remember of this venerable father.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HE APPEARS TO HIS BRETHREN IN THEIR SLEEP.

GREGORY. On another occasion, he had been requested by a certain devout man to send some of the brethren, and to build a monastery on his farm, near the city of Terracina. Acceding to his request, Benedict selected the brethren, and appointed both an abbot and a prior. As they were about to start, he promised them, saying, "Go, and on such a day I will come myself and show you the proper site on which to build the oratory, the brethren's refectory, the guest-rooms, and whatever else you are likely to require." Kneeling down for the benediction, they proceeded to the place; and waiting anxiously for the appointed day, they got ready every thing that they could think of for the reception of the father. However, on the night preceding the day in question, the man of God appeared in their sleep to both the abbot and the prior, and pointed out the site of each part of the building. When they arose from their sleep, they mutually related to each other what they had seen. Not, however, giving perfect credence to the vision, they continued to expect the man of God, as he had promised to come. But as he did not come on the appointed day, they returned to him in some disappointment, saying, "Father, we expected you to come as you had promised, and to show us where and what we ought to build; and you have never come at all." The Saint replied, "Brethren, what makes you say this? Did I not come according to promise?" They rejoined, "When was it that you came?" He answered, "Did I not appear to you both during your sleep, and point out every place to you? Go; and exactly as you saw in the vision, so construct every part of the building." Hearing this, they were filled with wonder; and returning to the above-mentioned monastery, they built every part of it exactly as they had learned from the vision.

PETER. I desire to be taught after what manner it could be possible for him to go to such a distance, and to give an answer to two men asleep which they were able to hear in a vision, so that they could recognise and comprehend what was said.

GREGORY. What difficulty do you find about the matter, Peter? Surely it is evident that the spirit is of a more subtle nature than the body; and we know for certain, on the autho-

city of the Scripture, that the prophet who was taken up in the land of Juda was suddenly placed down in the middle of Chaldæa with the dinner, which he gave to his famishing brother-prophet, and as suddenly found himself again in Juda. If Habacuc, therefore, was able while in the body to go to so great a distance and carry his dinner, what wonder if the father Benedict obtained power to go thither in the spirit, and to communicate what was required to the spirits of his brethren during their sleep? And thus, as the one went in the body to carry food for the wants of the body, so the other went in the spirit on an errand concerning the business of the spiritual life.

PETER. Your explanation, I acknowledge, has removed all my difficulty; and I would now gladly know something of his ordinary conversation and way of life.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SAINT THREATENS TWO NUNS WITH EXCOMMUNICATION.

GREGORY. Even his most ordinary conversation, Peter, bore the marks of exalted virtue; for he whose heart was so far above this world, could not let words fall in vain and to little purpose. Nay, if at any time he had spoken by way of threatening, rather than carrying his threats into effect, his words had exactly the same force and effect as if, instead of speaking doubtfully and in suspense, he had given his decision. Not far from his monastery two religious ladies of noble family lived together in a place which they had chosen, taking a brother from the convent for their chaplain. But as it happens in particular cases that nobility of birth produces meanness of mind, so that those are less apt to despise themselves in this world from the memory of their having been of some importance, the ladies in question, it appears, had not as yet learned from the habit which they wore to put any restraint upon their tongues; and thus it frequently happened that they sadly provoked the brother who served them as chaplain with their intemperate language. At length, after having long endured the annoyance, the brother proceeded to seek an interview with Benedict, to whom he gave an account of all the rude language he had been made to put up with. When the Saint had heard the monk's report, he immediately sent the two ladies a message to this effect, "Either restrain your tongues henceforth, or I will excommunicate you;" a sentence, be it remarked, which he did not carry out, but merely threatened. The ladies, however, paying no attention to the Saint's message, continued as bad as ever; and in a few days both of them died, and were buried in the church of the

monastery. As the High Mass was being celebrated in the church, and, according to custom, the deacon gave notice, "If there be any one present who does not communicate," the nurse, who was in the habit of making an offering for the repose of their souls, saw them move and leave their burying-place. Seeing this several times, and observing that it always happened at the time of the deacon giving his notice, she called to mind the message which the man of God had sent to them whilst they were living, namely, that except they mended their manners he would deprive them of communion with the Church. The nurse accordingly came to the servant of God, and with many tears told him the whole matter; whereupon the Saint, giving her the usual offering, said to her, "Go, and cause this to be offered for them, and they shall no longer be excommunicate." This was accordingly done; and when the deacon gave his regular notice that all persons not being communicants should leave the church, the two ladies were no more seen to go away. From whence it has become clear beyond a doubt, seeing that they no longer went away in the company of those who did not communicate, that they had received communion from the Lord through the servant of God.

PETER. This is a marvellous strange thing which you relate, that this man, as venerable and holy soever as he might be, should notwithstanding be able in this corruptible flesh to unbind souls already handed over to the invisible tribunal.

GREGORY. And yet, Peter, was not he also in this mortal body to whom it was said, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven"? To whose power and authority in binding and loosing they succeed, who by faith and holiness of life obtain the dignity of holy government. And to the end that man, who is of the earth, might be endowed with this sovereign power, the Maker of heaven and earth came down from heaven upon earth; and that flesh might be judge over spirit, this has been given to flesh by Him who, being God, has deigned to become flesh for men: for from thence hath our weakness been exalted above itself, in that the strength of God has deigned to become humbled beneath itself.

PETER. His miraculous power is certainly supported with solid reasons.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A YOUTH AFTER BEING BURIED IS CAST OUT OF HIS GRAVE.

GREGORY. On a certain day, it happened that a young novice, who loved his parents more than became the monastic state,

and was in the habit of slinking away without the benediction in order to visit the paternal home, died on the evening that followed one of these visits. He was buried, and the day after his body was found cast out of the tomb. The brethren buried him again with due care; but on the following day they found the body a second time disinterred, and cast forth from the grave. Hereupon they went with all haste to seek out their father Benedict, imploring his aid with great earnestness. The man of God with his own hand gave them a host of the Blessed Sacrament, saying, "Go and place this with the greatest reverence on the breast of the deceased, and then bury him once more." This done, the earth retained his body, and never again cast it up. By this, Peter, you may perceive how great was the holy man's merit before Jesus Christ, that even the very earth would cast forth the body of one who had not received the blessing of Benedict.

PETER. I plainly perceive it, and marvel exceedingly.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WAVERING BROTHER SEES A DRAGON IN HIS PATH.

A CERTAIN monk of his community was greatly given to inconstancy of purpose, and was reluctant to remain in the monastery; and after the man of God had both taken him to task, and had warned him in the most serious manner, still the monk could not bring himself to be willing to remain in the community, but urgently importuned to be set free from his vows. One day the venerable father, wearied out by the monk's persevering demand to be released, in a fit of anger bid him begone. But no sooner was the monk outside the monastery than he found a dragon open-mouthed standing in his way; and when the dragon that had thus appeared to him began to come near with the intent to devour him, trembling and palpitating, he began to cry out with all his might, "Help, help! the dragon will eat me up!" The brethren, running out of the monastery in haste, could see nothing of the dragon; but they brought the trembling and palpitating monk back to the monastery, who forthwith promised that he would never again think of going away. And from that hour forward he remained firm to his vows; the prayers of the holy man having enabled him to see with his eyes the dragon which up to that time he had been following.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HE CURES A CASE OF LEPROSY.

I MUST not pass over in silence a circumstance which I heard told by a distinguished person of the name of Antony, who related that a servant of his father, who had been struck with leprosy in such a dreadful manner that, the hair falling off, the skin began to swell, and ulcers to form beneath it, was sent in this state to the servant of God by his father, and that he was instantaneously restored to his former sound state of health.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HE HELPS A MAN OUT OF DIFFICULTY WITH HIS CREDITORS.

NOR can I conceal an anecdote that his disciple Peregrine was used to relate,—how a certain poor man, a believer, under the pressure of debt, thought his only help lay in coming to the man of God, and telling him of the difficulties in which he lay. He came, therefore, to the monastery, found the servant of God, and related to him how his creditor was pressing for the payment of twelve crowns. The venerable father answered, that in plain truth he had nothing like the twelve crowns; but nevertheless, kindly consoling the poor man in his necessity, he said to him, “Go; and in two days’ time come again, for at present I have not got what I mean to give you.” During the two days the Saint gave himself to prayer; and on the third day the man who was pressed for debt came according to appointment; when suddenly, on the top of the chest in the monastery which held their supply of corn, thirteen crowns were found. The man of God commanded them to be brought; and giving them to the afflicted debtor, he told him to give twelve to his creditor, and to keep the thirteenth for his own expenses.

But to return to the relation of those things which I learned from the disciples whom I mentioned in the beginning of this book. A certain man suffered from the rivalry and ill-will of an adversary so much, that at last it broke out to the extent of putting poison unawares into his drinking-cup. Though not powerful enough to take away life, the poison changed the colour of his skin in such a way that it made him seem to have the disease of leprosy. On being brought, however, to the man of God, he immediately recovered his health; for the moment the Saint had touched him every trace of discolorment from his skin was removed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW A GLASS BOTTLE CAST DOWN UPON THE STONES WAS NOT
BROKEN, AND HOW THE SAINT OBTAINED A SUPPLY OF OIL
BY HIS PRAYERS.

At the time that the great famine prevailed in Campania, the man of God had given away to different persons who were in want nearly every thing which the monastery possessed ; so that scarcely any thing remained in the cellar except a little oil in a glass bottle. At that moment a certain subdeacon, of the name of Agapitus, happened to come with a pressing entreaty that a little oil should be given to him. Hereupon the man of God, who had made up his mind to give away every thing that he had upon earth, that he might reserve all for heaven, gave orders that the little oil which remained should be given to the subdeacon who had come to ask for it. The monk, however, who was the cellarer, though he heard the order given, thought proper to neglect to comply with it ; and a little while afterwards, when asked if he had done as he had been told, the monk answered that he had done no such thing as give away the oil, for that if he had done so there would not have been a drop left in the monastery. Thereupon the man of God commanded the other brethren to take the glass bottle and throw it out of the window, lest disobedience should be the cause of any thing remaining in the monastery. They obeyed. Underneath the window was a steep precipice of huge rugged rocks. The glass bottle that had been thrown out fell upon the stones, but notwithstanding remained as much uninjured as if it had never been thrown out at all. The glass was not broken, nor the oil spilt. The man of God gave directions that it should be taken up, and given as it was to the subdeacon who had asked for it. Then summoning all the brethren, he gave the brother-cellarer a severe lecture upon his pride and disobedience in the presence of all the others. The lecture ended, he betook himself to prayer, together with the brethren. In the place where they were engaged in prayer there happened to stand an oil-cask, which was empty, and the lid of which was fastened down. As the Saint continued in prayer, the lid of the cask by degrees was forced up, and at length the oil, rising, began to flow over on the pavement and to inundate the place. When Benedict, the servant of God, perceived this, he put an end to his prayer ; and at the same time the oil also ceased to overflow. He then admonished the disobedient and unbelieving brother to have more faith and more humility another time. The brother was abashed, and took his correction in an edify-

ing manner; for the venerable father did not only admonish him by word of mouth, but also showed by the miracles he worked that the power of God resided in him. Nor from henceforward could any one doubt of the truth of his promises, seeing that in one and the same moment he had replaced a glass bottle that was nearly empty with an entire cask full of oil.

CHAPTER XL.

HE MEETS THE DEVIL IN THE DISGUISE OF A DOCTOR.

ONE day as he was going to the oratory of St. John, which stands upon the highest summit of the mountain, he was met by the enemy in the disguise of a doctor mounted upon a mule, and carrying in his hand a horn and a mortar. Upon asking him whither he was going, the devil replied, "I am going to the brethren, to administer some medicine to them." The venerable father Benedict proceeded on his way to the oratory; and having performed his devotions, he returned as fast as he could. The devil in the mean time had found one of the older monks engaged in drawing water; and entering into him there and then, he cast him upon the ground, and tormented him most grievously. When the man of God, as he was returning from the mountain, saw the monk thus tormented, he merely gave him a blow on the cheek with his hand, and immediately drove the evil spirit out of the monk in such a way that he never again dared to return.

PETER. I should like to be informed whether he always obtained the power to work these great miracles by his prayers, or whether he also occasionally worked them by an act of his will.

GREGORY. Those who with a devout mind cleave to God are able, according as the necessity of the thing requires, to work miracles in either way, sometimes performing their miracles by prayer and sometimes by an act of power. For when St. John says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave power to become sons of God," what wonder if they are able to perform miracles by an act of power? Now that miracles may be worked in either way St. Peter is witness, who raised Tabitha to life by his prayer, and brought death upon Ananias and Sapphira by merely rebuking them for their lie. For he is not said to have prayed for their death, but only to have spoken against the fault which they had committed. It is clear, therefore, that holy men sometimes perform their miracles by an act of power and sometimes by prayer, as in the instance of the Apostle, who in one case took away life by his reproof, and in

another restored it by his prayer. And I will now relate two other acts of the faithful servant of God Benedict, from which it will be evident that he was able in some cases to act by a power received directly from heaven and in others by prayer.

CHAPTER XLI.

HE DELIVERS A FARMER FROM HIS FETTERS BY A SINGLE LOOK.

THERE was a certain Goth, of the name of Zalla, a member of the impious sect of the Arians, who during the reign of Totila, the leader of the Goths, persecuted the good and devout members of the Catholic Church in so savage and bloodthirsty a manner, that if any one, either cleric or monk, fell into his hands he was nearly sure not to escape with his life. One day this man, while roaming about in search of rapine and plunder wherewith to gratify his avarice, fell in with a certain farmer, whom he put to the torture in the most cruel manner to make him discover where he had concealed his goods. The farmer, overcome by the pain, and hoping to gain at least a temporary respite, declared that he had given them into the keeping of Benedict, the servant of God. Zalla upon this gave over torturing him; and proceeding to tie his arms behind his back, he forced him to march in front of his horse, and show him the Benedict who had charge of his goods. The farmer, going before the Goth, brought him to the monastery, where they found Benedict sitting alone reading before the gate. The farmer, turning to the infuriated Goth, who was following him, said, "Here is the father Benedict whom I told you of." The enraged and savage Goth, thinking to carry all before him by the terror he was used to inspire, cried out at the top of his voice, "Come, sir, give up all the goods of this farmer which you have received." The man of God, on hearing his voice, lifted up his eyes from his book, looked at him for a moment, and then turned his glance upon the farmer standing with his hands tied behind him. The moment, however, his eyes rested upon the farmer's arms, the thongs that bound them began to drop off with a celerity that no man trying to loose them could have equalled. Zalla,—seeing his prisoner, who had come into the Saint's presence bound, now standing at large,—was so struck with terror on witnessing such an exhibition of power, that he fell at his feet and asked for his blessing. The holy man, however, without looking up from his study, called the brethren to take him, and bring him back to him after a time to receive the blessing. When the Goth was brought back to him, he admonished him to have done with the practice of such

cruelties for the time to come. The Goth, broken down and terrified with what he had seen, never dared to demand any thing more from the farmer whose fetters the man of God had loosed, not with his hands, but by his mere look. Thus you see, Peter, as I said before, those who are the familiar friends and servants of Almighty God are sometimes able to work miracles by an act of power. For the man who, without moving from his seat, could quell the fury of the terrible Goth, and by a glance of his eye could loose the thongs that bound the arms of the innocent farmer, by the very rapidity of the miracle showed that he worked it from a special power which he had received. I will now tell you of a great and wonderful miracle which he worked by means of prayer.

CHAPTER XLII.

HE RESTORES THE DEAD BODY OF A YOUTH TO LIFE.

On a certain day he had gone out to work in the fields with the brethren, when a certain peasant, carrying the dead body of his son in his arms, and being in an excess of grief from his loss, came to the monastery to inquire for Father Benedict. On being told that the father was out with the community upon the farm, he deposited the dead body of his son before the gate of the monastery, and, urged forward by his grief, went off in haste in search of the venerable father. Exactly at this time the father was returning from the farm with his brethren. No sooner had the bereaved peasant caught sight of him than he began to cry out, "Restore me my son! restore me my son!" The man of God interrupted him at these words, saying, "Do you mean, then, that I have taken away your son?" The peasant exclaimed, "He is dead; come, and raise him to life." When the venerable father had heard these words of the peasant, he was greatly grieved, and said, "Brothers, we must begone; this is no fitting work for us; it is proper only for the holy Apostles. What sort of burdens would you lay upon us which we are not able to bear?" The peasant, however, unable to endure his grief, persisted in his petition, vowing that he would not go away unless the father raised his son to life. The servant of God asked him, "Where is your son?" The peasant replied, "His body lies at the gate of the monastery." When they were come to the gate of the monastery, the man of God went down on his knees, and bent himself over the body of the child; then raising himself up, he stretched out his hands to heaven, saying, "Lord, look not at my sins, but regard the faith of this man, who entreateth that his son may be raised

to life; and restore the soul to this body from whence Thou hast taken it away." He had scarcely finished the words of his prayer when the body of the youth began to quiver, from the soul returning to it, in such a manner that its trembling and palpitating was perceived by all who were present. The man of God then, taking the youth by the hand, delivered him to his father sound and restored to life. It is clear, Peter, with regard to this miracle, that he had not in his possession the power to work it, but was forced to prostrate himself in prayer in order to obtain it.

PETER. All that you have said must undoubtedly be true, for you have positive proof in facts for all that you advance. I pray you to tell me if holy men are able to effect all that they wish, and to obtain all that they desire.

GREGORY. Who is likely in this life to attain to a higher perfection than St. Paul, who yet thrice besought the Lord to be freed from the motions of the flesh, and could not obtain that which he wished? I must tell you, therefore, now of something which the blessed Benedict desired to obtain, but was not able.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SAINT'S SISTER SCHOLASTICA.

HIS sister Scholastica, who had been consecrated to God from her earliest childhood, was in the habit of coming to see him once a-year. The Saint used to go to meet her at a house belonging to the monastery at no great distance from the gate. On a certain day, according to her custom, Scholastica came, and her venerable brother went down with some of his disciples to meet her, when they spent the day together in the praises of God and in holy conversation; and as the evening was approaching, they took their meal together. While they were sitting at table engaged in conversation, and the time was found to have passed rapidly, Scholastica begged of her brother, saying, "I pray you not to go away to-night, but let us continue together talking of the joys of heaven until the morning, Benedict." "What is that you are saying, sister? On no account can I possibly remain for the night out of the monastery." At this moment the sky was so clear that not a cloud could be seen. The holy woman, hearing these words of her brother, refusing to grant her request, clasped her hands together, and hiding her head in them, began to pray. And as she lifted her head up, such a storm of lightning and thunder, accompanied with abundant rain, had burst over the house, that neither the venerable Benedict nor his brethren were able to

move a foot outside ; for the holy woman, while hiding her head in her hands, had shed such a flood of tears as thereby to change the serenity of the sky to rain. Nor was it that the inundation followed shortly after her prayer ; but so perfect was the coincidence of both in point of time, that exactly as she lifted up her head the lightning was seen, and the self-same moment also the rain came down. The man of God, seeing that by reason of the thunder and the storm it was become impossible for him to make his way back to the monastery, was troubled, and began to complain, saying, " God forgive you, sister ; what is this that you have done ? " She answered, " Behold, I made my request to you, and you refused to listen to me. I have now asked my Lord, and He has heard me. Leave me, therefore, now if you can, and return to your monastery." Thus he who would not remain of his own choice, having it no longer in his power to go away, was forced to remain against his will. And thus it came to pass that the whole night was spent in watching, and they had their fill of mutual devout conversation upon the joys of the spiritual life. From the above, then, it appears, as I have already said, that the holy man desired something which he nevertheless could not obtain : for if we look into the mind of the venerable man, there can be no doubt but that he desired the continuance of the same fair weather in which he had come down from the monastery ; but to render his desire of no avail, he found opposed to it a miracle worked at the prayer of a woman. Nor is it to be wondered at that a woman who desired to prolong her interview with her brother should have prevailed over him : for, according to what is written in St. John, " God is love ; " and hence, quite agreeably to Divine justice, she who had the most love had the most power.

PETER. I declare what you say greatly delights me.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HE SEES THE SOUL OF HIS SISTER ENTERING HEAVEN IN THE FORM OF A DOVE.

GREGORY. On the following day the holy virgin returned to her own convent, and the man of God also went back to his monastery ; when, three days afterwards, as he was standing in his cell, his eyes being raised upwards, he saw the soul of his sister, separated from her body, enter heaven in the form of a dove. Overcome with joy at the sight of her glorified state, he gave thanks to Almighty God in hymns and canticles, and communicated to the brethren the news of her death. He also sent off some brothers to bear her body to the monastery, and

to lay it in the tomb which he had prepared for himself, that it might be brought to pass that the grave should not separate those whose minds had ever been united in the Lord.

CHAPTER XLV.

HE SEES THE WORLD IN A VISION, AND THE SOUL OF THE BISHOP GERMANUS TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN.

At another time also Servandus, the deacon and abbot of the monastery which had been built in Campania at the expense of Liberius the Patrician, had come, according to custom, to pay the holy man a visit ; for he frequently came to the monastery, being himself a man of learning and piety, that they might mutually console each other with the Word of Life, and at least unite in sighing together for the never-failing delights of their heavenly home, which they were not for the present permitted perfectly to enjoy. The time of rest being now come, the venerable Benedict went up into the higher room of the tower ; while Servandus had his lodging in the lower story, from which an open passage led to the upper room. Opposite the tower was a large building, in which the rest of the brethren were lodged. While the whole community were taking their rest, Benedict, the servant of God, rising from sleep before the midnight office, and standing near the window engaged in prayer, on looking up suddenly saw at that unusual hour of the night a light descending from above, so brilliant, that not only was the darkness dispelled by it, but the utmost brightness of day was far surpassed. The sequel of this vision, however, was exceedingly wonderful : for, as he himself afterwards related, the whole world seemed to be represented before his eyes, as if brought together under a single ray of light ; and whilst he was gazing intently upon the brightness before him, he beheld the soul of Germanus, the Bishop of Capua, being carried up by angels into heaven in a globe of fire. Being anxious to have a fellow-witness of this wonderful miracle, he called with a loud voice two or three times for Servandus the deacon. Servandus, alarmed with this loud and unusual summons of Benedict, rushed up, looked out, and saw a small remaining portion of the brightness. Then, while wondering at the miracle that he had seen, Benedict related to him all that had passed ; and sending to the monastery on Monte Casino to Theoprobis, one of the brothers, he caused a messenger to be sent off the same night to the city of Capua to inquire after the Bishop Germanus, and to bring back word. The order was obeyed ; and the brother who was sent found

the most reverend the Bishop Germanus already dead ; and on making careful inquiry, he discovered that his death had taken place at the very moment when the man of God had seen his soul taken up to heaven.

PETER. The circumstance is most wonderful and astonishing. But whereas you said that “ the whole world was brought before his eyes as if in a single ray of light,”—as this is altogether beyond my experience,—so I desire to know under what order of things it could be that the whole world should be seen by one man.

GREGORY. Hold this for certain, Peter, that to the soul which seeth the Creator every created thing is of small account, and however little of the light of the Creator the soul may have received, still every created thing will appear little to it ; for the effect of such light is to enlarge the boundary of the soul’s inward power of vision, which becomes thereby so dilated in the Divine perfections as to be higher than the world. The soul is even raised above itself ; and as it is carried beyond itself in the brightness of God, it is inwardly enlarged ; and while it as it were sees itself beneath itself, and from its lofty height, it is able to perceive how small an object may be which from below it was scarcely able to comprehend at all. Thus the man of God, who was able to see in the tower both the globe of fire and the angels returning to heaven, was beyond all doubt able to see them only in the light of God. What wonder, therefore, if he was able to see the whole world brought under his view, who was thus raised in mental contemplation so much beyond the world ? In that the world was said to have been brought before his sight, we are not to suppose that the heaven and the earth were diminished or contracted ; but that the mind of the beholder was expanded, and that, wrapt up in God, it was able without difficulty to see all that was beneath the Divine nature. In the same light, therefore, which shone externally before his eyes there was doubtless contained an inward light for the mind, which, while it lifted the beholder up on high, also showed to him the smallness of every object lower than itself.

PETER. I congratulate myself upon not having been more expeditious in understanding all that you have said, since my dullness has been the occasion of so profitable an explanation. Now that you have made every thing so clear to me, I pray you to proceed with your narrative.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OF THE RULE WRITTEN BY THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT.

I WOULD willingly relate many more things of this venerable father; but I am forced to pass them over purposely, as I have to hasten to speak of the actions of other holy men. I am unwilling, however, that you should be ignorant that the man of God, among so many miracles for which he was renowned in the world, was also not a little eminent for his wisdom and learning. He wrote a rule for his monks, as clear in its language as profound in its wisdom; and if any one desire to know more of the life and character of the holy man, he may find in the provisions of that rule all the acts of his public governments; for the holy man could not possibly have taught otherwise than he lived.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE SAINT PREDICTS HIS DEATH, AND PREPARES FOR IT BY RECEIVING THE HOLY VIATICUM.

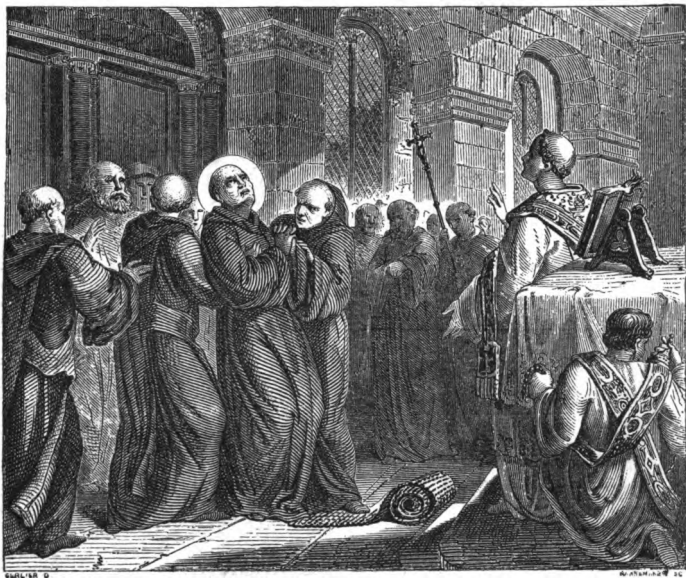
THE same year in which he was to depart this life he made known the day of his death to several of his disciples, as well to some who were in personal attendance upon him as to others who lived at a distance; charging the former to say nothing of what he had revealed to them, and pointing out to the latter the signs by which they should know of the departure of his soul from the body. The sixth day before his death he gave orders that his grave should be opened; and immediately afterwards he was seized by fever, and began to suffer from a burning heat. His feebleness increasing each day, on the sixth day he caused himself to be carried into the oratory by the brethren, and there prepared himself for his departure by receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord; then, leaning his feeble limbs upon the arms of his brethren, he stood with his hands lifted up to heaven, and breathed his last breath with a prayer upon his lips.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE ABSENT BRETHREN ARE MIRACULOUSLY MADE AWARE OF HIS DEATH.

THE very same day, two of his disciples—the one living in the monastery, and the other in a place far remote—had a revela-

THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. BENEDICT.



NO. IX.—THE DEATH OF THE SAINT.

To face p. 56.

tion of his death by an exactly similar vision. They beheld a pathway, spread with costly garments, and sparkling with innumerable lights, which reached directly eastward from his monastery up to heaven. Above, in the region of light, stood a man of venerable aspect, who asked them whose way it was that they were gazing upon. When they replied that they did not know, the venerable stranger answered, "*This is the way by which Benedict, the beloved of God, hath ascended to heaven.*" Then, just as the brethren who had been present and had seen the death of the holy man, so these two, who were absent, knew his death from the sign that had been foretold to them. He was buried in the oratory of St. John the Baptist, which he had himself erected over the ruined site of the shrine of Apollo. In the cave also in which he first lived, even to this day miracles are wrought upon such as repair to it with true faith.

What I am going to relate happened quite recently. A certain woman, who had so entirely gone out of her mind as to go about wandering wild over hills and valleys and forests and plains, resting nowhere except from sheer exhaustion, happened on a certain day to stray unconsciously in her wanderings into the cave of St. Benedict, where she entered in and remained. On the following morning, on coming out, she was as completely restored to her right mind as if nothing had ever been the matter with her, and so continued to the day of her death.

PETER. What can be the reason that we should find the same thing from experience in the patronage of the martyrs,—that they do not bestow so great favours where their bodies are buried as by some of their relics ; and often work their greatest miracles where their bodies are not present, at least not whole and entire ?

GREGORY. Where the bodies of holy martyrs lie, there is no doubt, Peter, but that they are able to work many miracles, as, indeed, they are continually doing. For to such as have recourse to them in sincerity they show many wonderful favours ; but because it may happen that weak minds will doubt whether they have the power of hearing in such places where it is manifest that their bodies are not present, it is necessary for them to show forth in such places where there is a doubt of their bodies being present still greater evidence of their power to work miracles. Those, however, whose minds are fixed upon God have so much the greater merit in their faith, inasmuch as they know, not only that their bodies are present, but that they have the power of hearing the prayers addressed to them. Hence He who was the truth itself, in order to increase the faith of His disciples, declared, "If I go not away, the Paraclete will not come unto you." It being plain that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, ever proceedeth both from the Father and the

Son, why should the Son say that He must depart in order that the Paraclete might come, seeing that the Paraclete never ceases to be present with Him ? But forasmuch as the disciples, conversing with our Lord in the flesh, did always desire to see Him with their bodily eyes, it was rightly said unto them, " Except I go away, the Paraclete shall not come unto you ;" as if it had been explained thus : " If I do not withdraw My bodily presence, I do not show you the love of the Spirit ; and unless you cease to see Me in the flesh, you shall never learn to love Me in the spirit."

PETER. I am delighted with what you say.

GREGORY. For the present we must pause awhile, that, if we should proceed to the narrative of the miracles of any other saints, we may in the mean time try and repair our strength by a time of rest and silence.

THE
SPIRIT OF ST. BENEDICT'S RULE.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. DR. ULLATHORNE, O.S.B.

ST. GREGORY says, that the reader who desires to have a more intimate knowledge of the conduct of St. Benedict than he has recorded of him in his Life, must study his Rule; for that so holy a saint had not lived differently from what he taught. He particularly notices how full of light are his words, and how happy their discretion. It would take a volume to enumerate all the commendations which this Rule has, age after age, received from Popes, from Councils, from Saints, and from spiritual writers. Numerous learned commentaries on the one hand, mystical expositions on the other, have been written upon its text. Yet so simple and clear is its language, that, after the lapse of thirteen hundred years, it presents but few obscurities. Pope Urban VIII. summed up its praises in a word, when he said that its author was filled with the wisdom of all the Saints. Nothing could better express the large interior spirit of St. Benedict, his searching estimate of human nature, his intimate perception of the forces which God confers on that nature through grace, and his appreciation of the efficacy of prayer. His Rule has, in fact, formed the minds, the hearts, and the habits of legions of saints and holy persons. There is nothing in it which tends, as if it were merely drawn up in conformity with some individual type, to cramp and narrow the soul to that one man's particular standard. Rather may it be said, that this holy Rule breathes with the free inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and whilst it tends to free the heart from the encumbrance of its corruption, it elevates that heart with a silent, direct, and tranquil movement towards God.

The two master-thoughts which pervade the book, and which return continually upon the mind of him who listens to the Saint's precepts, are the presence of God inspecting at all times the heart of man, and the responsibility of man for all his thoughts and actions to God's holy judgment; whilst the two leading virtues demanded of the monk are humility and

obedience. The famous chapter on the Twelve Degrees of Humility sums up the whole spirit of the perfect religious man ; whilst the two chapters on the Abbot embody the qualities requisite for the religious government of a community. St. Benedict keeps unceasingly before the mind of the abbot his responsibility to God for the souls of his brethren. The Rule is to be his master, and discretion is to be the queen of his virtues. The celebrated Cosmo, Grand Duke of Tuscany, when asked why he studied the Rule of St. Benedict so assiduously, made the answer, that he found in it the most admirable maxims of wisdom for the government of his own people.

The Rule is divided into seventy-three chapters, of which several are very brief. Of these, some are doctrinal, and teach what belongs to the spirit of the monk ; others provide for the government of the community, and prescribe its observances ; others, again, regulate the psalmody, and ordain the times, the order, and the divisions of the Divine Office throughout the year ; whilst others direct the private reading of the monks, their manual labour, their public employments, or their special offices in the general government of the community. Our present object is to gain an insight into the spirit of this Rule. We shall, then, but glance at its directive provisions, and shall dwell mostly on what is doctrinal. The substance of this portion of the Rule is derived from the Holy Scriptures, and that in a most beautiful and original manner. Sometimes the sacred words weave themselves like flowers into the web of the Saint's language, as if they sprang spontaneously from his own gifts of grace ; often they rise up in the manner of direct quotations, yet these are always brief, pregnant with the subject, and to the point. Of these texts there are, for example, twenty in the Invitation or Preface, fifty in the chapter on the Instruments for working Good Works, and forty-three in the chapter on Humility. In our short summary of the spirit of the Saint's Rule, whilst we do our best to adhere to his words and style, we must naturally be content to leave many things omitted.

Let us listen, then, to the great patriarch of the monastic life, as he begins his Prologue, or

INVITATION.

HEARKEN, O my son, to the precepts of thy master, and bend to him the ear of thy heart ; cheerfully receive the admonitions of thy loving father, and faithfully observe them ; for only through the labours of obedience canst thou return to Him whom thou didst abandon in the slothful days of thy disobedience. To thee I direct my words, whosoever thou art, who art giving up thy private pleasures, who art making thyself ready to serve in the wars of Christ, our true Lord and King,

and who art bracing on the bright and most valorous arms of obedience.

First, then, whatever thou beginnest to do well, ask of Him, through most earnest prayer, to bring it to perfection ; lest, whilst He condescends to number us amongst His children, He should be grieved with our evil doings. For we must always be so obedient to our Father in His good gifts that He may never in His anger disinherit His children. Let us arise, then ; for the Scripture arouses us, and says, "Now is the hour for us to wake up from sleep ;" and, opening our eyes to the deifying light, let us listen with our astonished ears to the Divine voice, which cries to us, "To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts ;" and again, "He who hath ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches." And what does He say ? "Come, O children, hearken to Me ; I will teach you the fear of the Lord : run whilst you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death lay hold of you. And the Lord, seeking His workman out of the multitude of His people by this cry, says again, "Who is the man that loves life, and wishes to see good days ?" But if thou hearest and answerest, "I, Lord, am the man," God says to thee, "If thou wouldst have true and everlasting life, stay thy tongue from evil, and let not thy lips speak guile : turn from evil, and do good ; seek out peace, and follow it : " and when thou shalt have done this, "My eyes are upon thee, and My ears are open to thy prayers : and before thou callest Me, I will say, Behold, I am here !" What is sweeter for us, dearest brethren, than this voice of the Lord inviting us ? See, in His pity He shows to us the way of life ! Let us, then, gird our loins with faith and the practice of good works ; and with the Gospel for our guide, let us go forward on the ways of Him who calls us, that we may deserve to see Him in His kingdom.

We are going, then, to establish a school for the Lord's service ; and we hope that nothing will be found in its constitution which is either harsh or over severe. But if some things should be found a little strict, it is because reason and equity combine to require it, as well for the correcting of our vices as for the perfecting of charity. Yet start not back through fear on this account, nor fly the way of salvation ; for the beginnings of the path must be narrow ; but as thou proceedest on this path of conversion and faith, thy heart will grow larger, and thou wilt run along the way of God's commandments with an unspeakable sweetness of affection.

THE INSTRUMENTS FOR WORKING GOOD WORKS.

St. BENEDICT delivers seventy-three instruments to the spiritual workman with which he is to practise his calling. These

consist of precepts and counsels extracted from the Holy Scriptures. They are set in order in as many short sentences, and they comprise the whole morality and perfection of the Gospel. The workshop, he says, in which these instruments of the spiritual calling are to be diligently put to use is the enclosure of the monastery, where stability of life is practised.

ON OBEDIENCE.

THE first degree of humility is obedience without delay. This belongs to those who hold nothing to be dearer to them than Christ; and it is to be practised either for the sake of the holy service which they have professed, or for the fear of hell, or for the glory of eternal life; so that the moment any thing is commanded them by a superior, they will no more delay the doing it than if God Himself had spoken to them. Of them the Lord says, "In the hearing of the ear he obeyed Me;" and again, He says to the doctors, "He who hears you, hears Me." These, then, quit at once their own pursuits, and their own will, on the instant they disengage their hands, leave what they were about unfinished, and follow the voice of authority with the ready footstep of obedience; and thus one and the same moment hears the voice of the master speaking, and sees the act of the disciple responding in the swiftness of the fear of God. These are they who love to walk to eternal life; and hence they seize on the narrow path, of which the Lord says, "Narrow is the path which leads to life." And doubtless they imitate the Lord, who says, "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." But this obedience will only be acceptable to God, and sweet to men, if what is enjoined be executed, not hesitatingly, or sluggishly, or grudgingly, or with murmuring, or with signs of reluctance; for the obedience we give to superiors we show to God, and God loves the cheerful giver. For if the disciple obeys with a murmuring heart, even though he do what is enjoined him, God will not accept it, because He sees the heart of the murmurer, and his act will bring no grace; but unless he give satisfaction by amendment, he incurs the punishment of murmurers.

If by chance it should so happen that any brother is directed to do what is very difficult, or is even beyond his power to do, let him receive the command with meekness and obedience. But if he sees that the weight of it exceeds the measure of his strength, let him patiently and opportunely explain the impossibility to his superior; but let it be done in no spirit of pride, of resistance, or of contradiction. And if, after he has made his suggestions, the superior should still persist in his command, let the disciple understand that it is expedient for him; and from charity, trusting in the help of God, let him obey.

ON HUMILITY.

THE holy Scripture cries out, and says, "Every one who exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he who humbleth himself shall be exalted:" in which saying it is shown to us that all lifting-up of oneself is of the nature of pride. Against this the Prophet guarded himself when he said, "O Lord, my heart is not puffed up; nor are my eyes haughty. Neither have I walked in great matters, nor in wonderful things above me." What, then, did he do? "If I was not humbly-minded, but exalted my soul; as a child that is weaned is towards its mother, so is the reward in my soul." If, then, we would gain the loftiest summit of humility, and would desire to attain to that heavenly exaltation which is only reached through the humility of this our present life, we must by our ascending actions form that ladder which Jacob saw in his vision, on which the angels of God were ascending and descending. By the which we can understand nothing else but that we descend by exalting ourselves, and ascend by humbling ourselves. The ladder thus raised is our life in the world, which the Lord raises up to heaven when our heart is humbled; and the sides of this ladder are our soul and body, on the which our divine vocation fixes divers degrees of humility and discipline.

The first degree of humility is, to have always the fear of God before our eyes, to shun forgetfulness, to remember all those things which God commands, to think well how they who despise God fall into hell for their sins, and to bear in mind the eternal life which awaits them who fear God; then, keeping ourselves hourly in safe custody from vice and sin, whether of the thoughts, tongue, eyes, hands, feet, or of our own will, we must hasten to cut away the desires of the flesh. Let a man account himself as seen from heaven by God at all hours, and let him consider how his actions in every place are visible to the sight of the Divine Majesty, and how the angels are constantly reporting them to God. The Prophet proves this to us when he shows how God is always present in our thoughts, and says, "God searching the heart and the reins;" and again, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vain;" and again, "Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off." And that he may be watchful as to his perverse thoughts, let the humble brother say in his heart, "Then shall I be spotless before Him, if I keep myself from my iniquity." We are warned from doing our own will when the Scripture says to us, "Turn from thy own will;" and again, "Let us ask God in prayer that His will be done in us." Justly, then, are we taught not to do our own will, when we remember what the holy Scripture says: "There is a way that seemeth to a man right, and the ends

thereof lead to death ;" and therefore must we shun the desire which is evil, because death is seated at the door of delight ; whence the Scripture says, "Go not after thy lusts." Wherefore, as the eyes of the Lord behold the good and the wicked, and the Lord is always looking out from heaven upon the sins of men, that He may see if there be any one who understands and seeks after God ; and as the angels are watching over us, and reporting our deeds day and night to the Lord our Maker, and to God the Creator of all,—we must at all times be cautious, brethren, lest, as the Prophet says in the psalm, "God should behold us" at one of those times turned unto evil, and become useless ; and though sparing us for the moment (because He is merciful, and waits our conversion to good), still He should say to us in the time to come, "This thou didst, and I was silent."

The second degree of humility is, when not doing our own will, or delighting to have our own desires, we imitate that word of our Lord : "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me ;" and the proverb saith, "Self-will brings pain, but duty wins the crown."

The third degree of humility is, when for the love of God we are subject with all obedience to a superior, imitating the Lord ; of whom the Apostle says, "He was made obedient even unto death."

The fourth degree of humility is, when our very obedience, whilst tried by contradictions, or even insults, in silence embraces patience, and neither suffers herself to be provoked from her endurance, nor to fly away : for the Scripture says, "He who perseveres to the end shall be saved ;" and again, "Let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord." And those who are secure in the hope of the Divine reward, follow after rejoicing, and say, "But in all these things we overcome for the sake of Him who loves us."

The fifth degree of humility is, when of all the evil thoughts which assail thy heart, and all the evil acts that thou dost in secret, making thy humble confession, thou concealest none from the abbot. The Scripture exhorts us to this duty, saying, "Make thy way known to the Lord, and hope in Him ;" and again, "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord ; and behold Thou hast forgiven me the wickedness of my sin."

The sixth degree of humility is, when the monk is contented with whatever is poorest and meanest, and when, in whatever he is enjoined to do, he judges himself to be nothing but an indifferent and an unworthy labourer, saying with the Prophet, "I am brought to nothing, and I knew it not ; I am nothing before Thee, and I am always with Thee."

The seventh degree of humility is, when he does not merely proclaim that he is the lowest and vilest of men with his

tongue, but when with the innermost affection of his heart he believes this to be the fact, and humbles himself, saying with the Prophet, "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people; being lifted up, I am humbled and troubled;" and again, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy commandments."

The eighth degree of humility is, when the monk does nothing but what the common rule of the monastery, or the example of the seniors, encourages him to do.

The ninth degree of humility is, when the monk keeps his tongue from speaking, and observing silence, speaks only when he is questioned: for the Scripture shows him that, "In the multitude of words thou shalt not want sin," and that "A man full of words shall not be established on the earth."

The tenth degree of humility is, when he is not prone or quick to laughter; for it is written, "The fool lifts his voice in laughter."

The eleventh degree of humility is, when if duty calls him to speak, the words of a monk are gentle, and without levity; humble, and uttered with gravity: let him speak in words few and full of meaning, and not be clamorous with his voice, as it is written, "The wise man is known by the fewness of his words."

The twelfth degree of humility is, when, not only in his heart but in all his person, the monk manifests his lowliness to all who behold him, and at all times; so that whether he be at his work, or in the house of prayer, or in the monastery, or in the garden, or on the road, or in the fields, or wheresoever he may be sitting, walking, or standing, he have his head always bowed down, and his eyes cast to the earth; and judging himself at all times guilty, let him account himself as already brought before the tremendous judgment of God; ever saying in his heart that which the publican in the Gospel said with eyes fixed on the earth: "Lord, I am not worthy to raise my eyes up to heaven;" or again, with the Prophet, "I am bowed down and humbled exceedingly."

And thus, when all the steps of humility have been ascended, the monk will straightway come to that charity of God which, as it has grown perfect, casts fear away; through which charity he will now begin to keep all that he formerly observed, not, as heretofore, with fear, but without labour, as it were naturally and in the way of habit; and no longer from the fear of hell, but from the love of Christ, and through the strength of a good habit, and through the delight which he takes in virtue.

ON THE ABBOT AND HIS GOVERNMENT.

THE abbot who is worthy to preside over a monastery must always be mindful what he is called, and make his deeds answer to his name; for he is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery, and is called by His paternal name; for the Apostle says, "Ye have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, in whom we cry out, Abba, father." Wherefore the abbot is not to teach, or to constitute, or to command any thing beyond the limits of what God has prescribed. By his words he is to leaven the minds of the disciples with the leaven of Divine justice; he is ever to remember that both of his own teaching and of their obedience he will have to give account in the day of God's judgment; he is to show forth what is good and holy in his acts much more than by his words. To the intelligent disciples, his words will show the Lord's commands; but to the simple and the dull of heart, his acts will best make known the sacred precepts. He is to make no distinction of persons amongst the community; he is not to love one more than another, except in so far as he finds them more virtuous and obedient; he is not to make more of the well-born than of those who come from a lowly condition, unless it be for another and a more reasonable cause; for we are all one in Christ, and Christ only distinguishes between those who are better and more humble. He is, then, to have an equal charity for all, and to observe the same discipline towards all. In his government he must mingle seasons with seasons, the sweetness which wins the heart with the gravity which impresses reverence; at one time displaying the firmness of the master, at another the affection of the father, entreating the meek and patient, commanding the restless and undisciplined, rebuking and correcting the negligent and insubordinate disciples. So far from dissembling the offences of those who sin, let him, the very moment they begin to spring up, pull them out by the roots; and as to the proud, the disobedient, and the obdurate, let him remember the Scripture that saith, "The fool is not corrected by words."

The abbot must also reflect how arduous a task it is to govern souls, and to adapt oneself to the numerous requirements of many minds and various characters. He is to account the salvation of the souls committed to him as his first and chiefest care, and not to have too much solicitude for temporal and transient things, but to remember how he has to give an account of souls, and how the Scripture tells him, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all those things will be added to you;" and again, "Nothing is wanting to them who fear Him." Let him, then, prepare to give an account of the soul committed to him; for the Shepherd will require

His sheep at his hands. Moreover, whilst he is striving to amend the souls of others by his admonitions, he will have the better opportunity of correcting his own vices.

The abbot is to be chosen by the whole community, or by the council of its wisest members. He is to be selected for his superior wisdom, even though he should have held the last place in the community ; and let him know that he ought to think more of profiting the brethren than of ruling over them. He must be learned in doctrine, that he may know how to bring forth the new and the old ; chaste, sober, merciful, and humble. Let him ever exalt mercy over judgment, that he himself may find mercy ; let him be prudent in correcting, and do nothing in anger, lest whilst he seeks to scour away the rust he break the vessel ; and let him suspect his own frailty, and remember that the bruised reed is not to be broken. Not that he is to allow vices to be fostered ; but he is to correct them prudently and with charity, and as he sees to be best suited for each individual person. Let him study to be loved more than to be feared ; and let him not be excitable or over-anxious, excessive or obstinate of character, or of a bitter zeal, or too suspicious, or he will never know rest. In what he commands let him be forecasting and considerate, both as to what concerns God and what concerns this world ; and let him be discreet and moderate in what he enjoins, remembering the discretion of Jacob, who says, " If I cause my flocks to be over-driven, they will all die in one day." Revolving these and other testimonies to discretion, let him so moderate all things that the strong may desire his government, and the weak may not shrink from its influence.

ON COUNSEL.

WHENEVER things of great moment are to be determined in the monastery, let the abbot assemble the whole community, and lay the whole subject before them ; and when he has heard the counsels of the brethren, let him consider with himself, and do what he judges best. But let him not forget to consult *all* the brethren ; for God often reveals to the younger what is best, and Samuel and Daniel in their youth judged their elders. In the less important affairs of the monastery, however, let him take the elders only to counsel ; as it is written, " Do all things with counsel, and thou shalt not repent after thy deed."

ON THE DIVINE OFFICE AND PRAYER.

ST. BENEDICT calls the Divine Office the work of God, and enjoins that nothing be preferred before it. He devotes twelve

chapters to its regulation. The moment the sign for its commencement is given, all occupations are instantly to give way, and each one must hasten with grave demeanour to the choir. We believe the Divine presence to be every where, and that in every place the eyes of the Lord look down upon the good and the bad ; but especially and beyond all doubt must we realise this when we assist at the Divine Office. And therefore must we have constantly in mind what the Prophet says : " Serve the Lord in fear ;" and again, " Sing skilfully unto him ;" and, " In the sight of the angels will I sing to Thee." Let us consider, then, how we ought to bear ourselves in the sight of God and His angels ; and let us so stand to the psalmody that the mind may accord with the voice of prayer. The holy Patriarch says, " We never presume to offer what we wish to suggest to men of power and station, unless with humility and reverence." How much more, then, ought we to supplicate the Lord God of all with all humility and purity of devotion ! Let us, then, understand that it is not for our much speaking, but in purity of heart and compunction of tears, that we are heard ; and therefore let prayer be brief and pure, unless it be protracted from the effective grace of Divine inspiration. In community, then, when the Divine Office is concluded, prayer is to be brief ; and when the superior gives the sign, all rise together. But if a brother would pray in private in the church, let him return to the church with simplicity, and there pray ; not with a loud voice, but with tears and singleness of heart.

ON THE DAILY EMPLOYMENT.

IDLENESS, says St. Benedict, is the enemy of the soul ; hence he apportions the intervals between the seven canonical hours, according to the seasons of the year, between manual labour and reading. On Sunday, all leisure time is to be devoted to reading and meditation. The artisans who are in the monastery are to exercise their craft with all humility and reverence, as the abbot may direct. But if any one should grow elated because of his skill, and should come to fancy himself to be of some importance to the community, he is to be removed from his employment ; if, however, he return to humility, his employment may be restored to him.

OF THE SICK BRETHREN, THE AGED, AND THE YOUTHFUL.

BEFORE all, and above all, must the sick be cared for, and let them be served as if in very truth it were Christ ; for He has said, " I was sick, and you visited Me ; and what you did to one of the least of these, you did to Me." But let the infirm brethren reflect that it is for the honour of God they are so

served ; and let them not be exacting, so as to aggrieve the brethren who serve them ; yet must they be borne with patiently, because a greater reward is gained from waiting upon such as these. Hence let the abbot take the greatest care that they suffer no neglect. Let the sick brethren have a separate chamber assigned to them ; and let him who serves them be chosen for his fear of God and for his diligence and watchfulness.

Although human nature is drawn of itself to compassionate the aged and the young, notwithstanding let the authority of the Rule look considerably towards them. Let the infirmity incident to those ages, then, be tenderly regarded : in their case the strictness of the Rule must by no means hold as to diet ; rather let there be a tender consideration for them, and let them anticipate the regular hours.

ON THE RECEPTION OF GUESTS AND STRANGERS.

LET all guests who come be received as Christ ; for He will one day say, "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in : " and let suitable honour be given to them all, but more to those who are of the household of the faith, and to strangers. So soon, then, as a guest is announced, let him be met by the prior or by the brethren with every observance of charity ; and let them first pray together, and then associate in peace. Let them not offer the kiss of peace before prayer, because of diabolical illusions ; but in the act of saluting, let all humility be exhibited at the coming and departing of guests, with the head bowed down, or with the body prone to the earth : let Christ be revered in them, for it is He who is received. Let the Divine law be read before the guest, that he may be edified ; and after that, let every considerate attention be shown him ; when, unless it be a day of indispensable obligation, the superior may break his fast in consideration for his guest, though the brethren must follow their usual customs. Let the abbot present water for the hands of his guests ; and let the abbot, as well as the whole community, be ready to wash the feet of all guests ; and when washed, let them repeat this verse : "We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple." But above all, let the greatest care be solicitously exhibited in the reception of the poor and of strangers, because Christ is the more received in them ; for the fear of the rich will always of itself obtain honour for them. Let a brother be appointed to the chambers of the guests whose soul is possessed by the fear of God ; and let the house of God be wisely managed by the prudent.

At the door of the monastery let a wise old man be placed, who knows how to take a message and to give an answer, and whose gravity will not let him wander from his post. He should have his cell by the door, that all comers may find him

at once, and get their answer ; and the moment any one knocks, or the poor cry out, let him answer, "Thanks be to God ;" or let him bless the comer, and with all meekness, in the fear of God, let him hasten to give an answer in the fervour of charity.

OF THE GOOD ZEAL WHICH MONKS OUGHT TO HAVE.

As there is a bad and bitter zeal, which separates from God and brings to hell, so there is a good zeal, which separates from vice, and brings to God and to eternal life. Let, then, the monks exercise this zeal with the most fervid love ; that is to say, let them prevent each other in charity ; let them bear each other's infirmities, whether of body or of conduct, most patiently. Let no one follow that which he accounts useful for himself, but rather what is profitable to another. Let them exercise the love of the brotherhood with chaste affection ; let them love their abbot with sincere and humble love ; let them prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ ; and may He bring us all together unto life eternal. Amen.

EVERY OBSERVANCE OF JUSTICE IS NOT EMBODIED IN THIS RULE.

WE have drawn up this Rule to be observed in monasteries, that we may give proof that we have at least made some beginning in the way of right life and conversation ; but for those who are hastening forwards on the way to perfect life, there are the writings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which brings a man to the height of perfection. For what page, or what portion of the Divine authority, from the Old and the New Testaments, is there which is not a most right law of human life ; or what book of the holy Catholic Fathers does not resound with what will bring us by the direct road to our Creator ? Moreover, there are the conferences of the Fathers,* their institutions and life ; and then there is the Rule of the holy Father St. Basil. What else are these but examples of holy and obedient monks, and instruments of virtues ? But to us who are idle, ill-conducted, and negligent, is left the blush of shame.

Whoever thou mayest be, then, who art hastening to thy heavenly country, do thou first perfect in thyself, with the help of Christ, this least of Rules, which we have drawn up for beginners ; and then mayest thou hope to come, under the protection of God, to those greater and more elevated maxims and virtues of which we have just spoken.

* St. Benedict refers to the Conferences of Cassian.

